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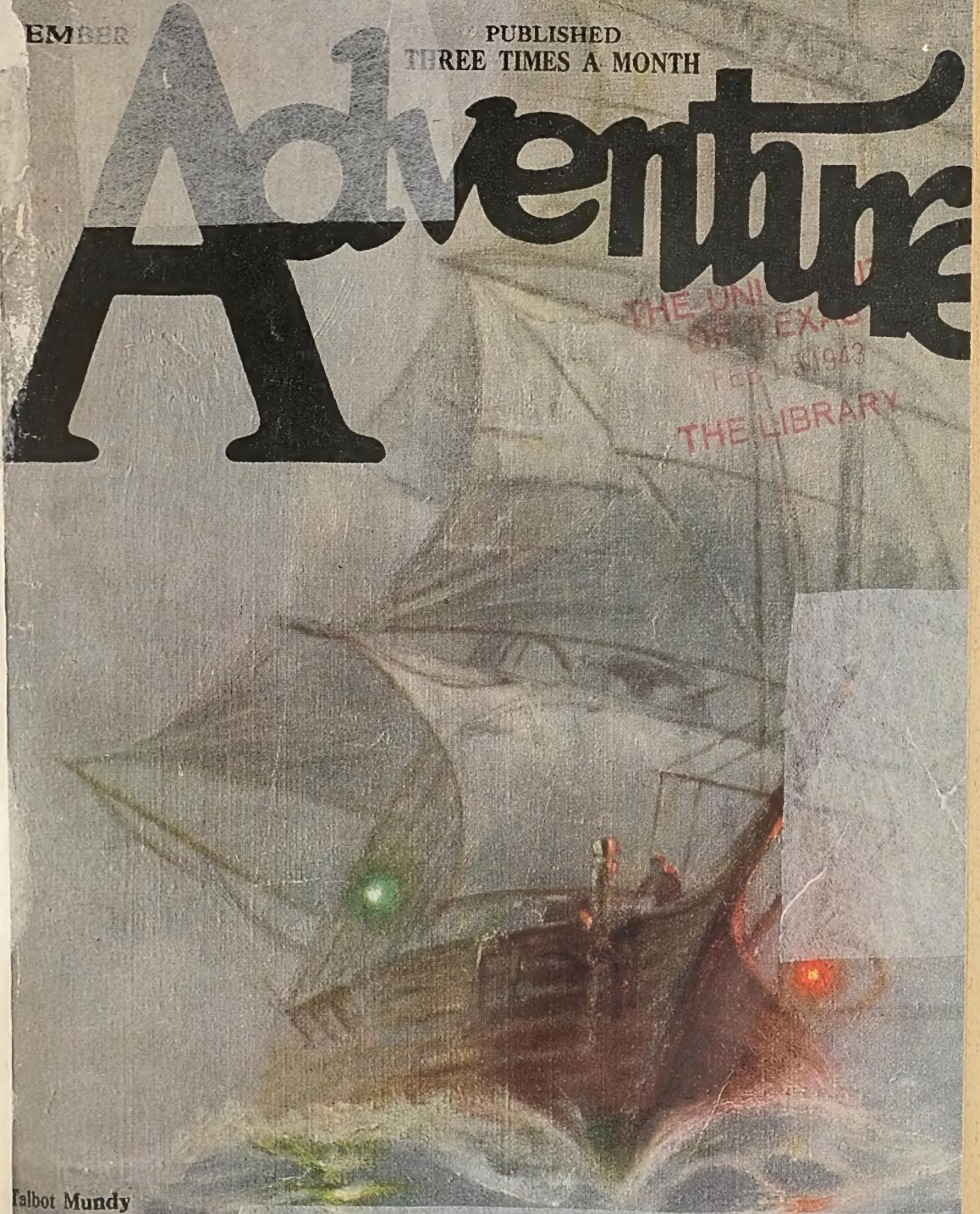

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Dr. John I. Cochrane
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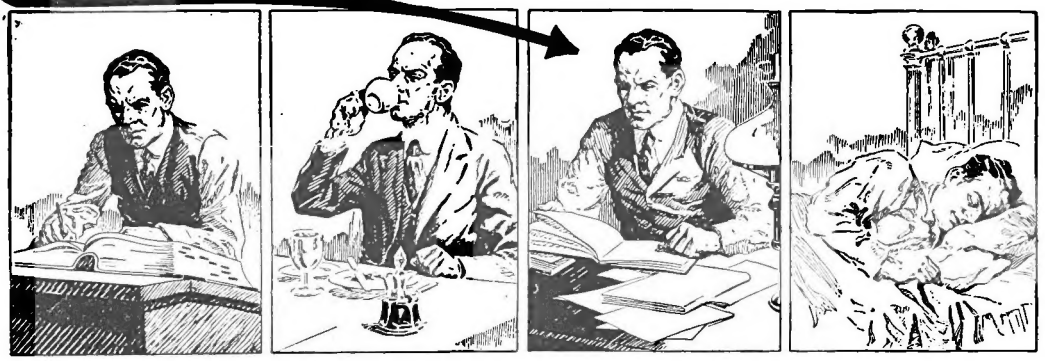
These Are The Hours That Count



MOST of your time is mortgaged to work, meals and sleep. But the hours after supper are *yours,* and your whole future depends on how you spend them. You can fritter them away on profitless pleasure, or you can make those hours bring you position, money, power, *real success* in life.

Thousands of splendid, good-paying positions are waiting in every field of work for men *trained to fill them.* There's a big job waiting for *you*—in your present work or any line you choose. Get ready for it! You can do it without losing a minute from work, or a wink of sleep, without hurrying a single meal, and with plenty of time left for recreation. You can do it in one hour after supper each night, right at home, through the International Correspondence Schools.

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- ☐ STATIONARY ENGINEER
- ☐ Marine Engineer
- ☐ ARCHITECT
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- ☐ Architectural Draftsman
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- ☐ Sheet Metal Worker
- ☐ Textile Overseer or Supt.
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- ☐ Pharmacy
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- ☐ Commercial Law
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- ☐ Common School Subjects
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- ☐ Railway Mail Clerk
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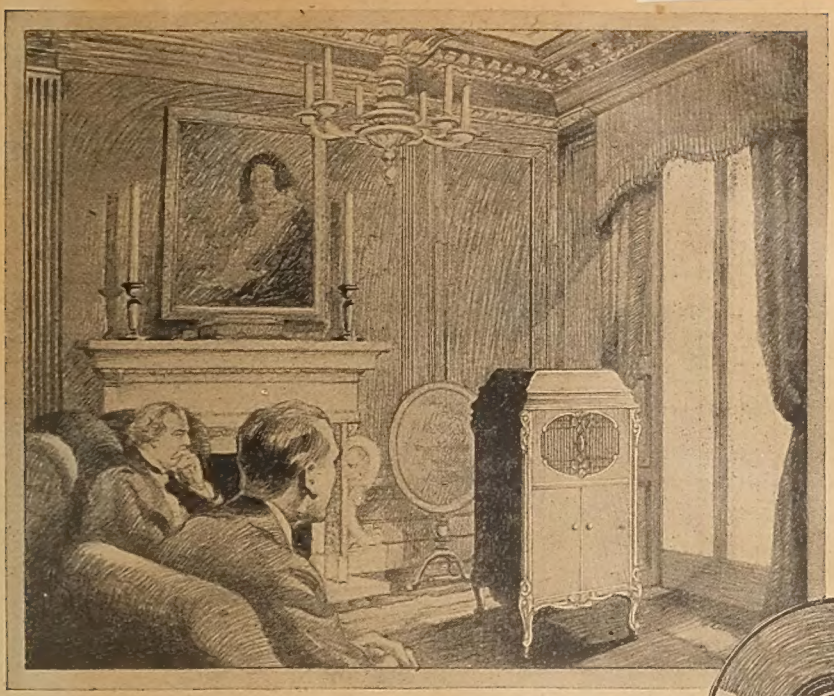

What They Say
in High Musical Circles

Ask any musical authority which phonograph he prefers. Ask music teachers, musicians, critics. And the number who say The Brunswick will surprise you.

Ask which *records* they prefer, and again you will hear The Brunswick.

And they will tell you, too, that while these records are sweeter and more beautiful, on *any* phonograph, the *ideality* is attained with a Brunswick Record on a Brunswick.

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Due to *exclusive* methods of Reproduction and of Interpretation, Brunswick achieves perfect rendition of the so-called "difficult" tones—the piano, the harp, the human voice; attaining even soprano High "C" without "metallic" intrusion, "chatter" or vibration. *Methods which apply to no other phonograph or records.*

The Brunswick Method of Reproduction is *exclusively* Brunswick. The Brunswick Method of Interpretation, in producing records, has not been successfully imitated.

Hence, buying any phonograph, without at least hearing The Brunswick, is a mistake. And to be without Brunswick Records is to miss much of what is best in music.

Ask your nearest Brunswick dealer for a demonstration. The Brunswick plays all records—and Brunswick Records can be played on any phonograph. Hear, compare—then judge for yourself.

THE BRUNSWICK-BALKE-COLLENDER CO., Chicago
Manufacturers—Established 1845

NOTE—New Brunswick Records are on sale at all Brunswick dealers on the 16th of each month in the East, and in Denver and the West on the 20th.

Three Brunswick Super-Feature Records

The musical sensation of the day—widely discussed throughout the entire musical world. A revelation of what the new Brunswick Method of Interpretation is doing for phonographic music. *By all means hear them.*

10022 *Rustle of Spring* . . *Godowsky*

13021 { *I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen* . *Theo. Karle*
{ *and Crescent Male Trio*
{ *Lass o'Killean* *Theo. Karle*

10001 *Absent* . . . . *Chamlee*

Any phonograph can play Brunswick Records.

BRUNSWICK
PHONOGRAPHS AND RECORDS

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ADVENTURE
Nov. 10th, 1921

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Volume 31
Number 4

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The New York Wireless Institute will make you an operator—AT HOME—in your spare time—quickly, easily and thoroughly. No previous training or experience required. Our Home Study Course has been prepared by Radio Experts. Experts able to impart their practical and technical knowledge to *YOU* in an *easy to understand* way. The graded lessons mailed you will prove so fascinating that you will be eager for the next one. The instruments furnished *free*, will make it as easy to learn the Code as it was to learn to talk. *All you will have to do*, is to listen.

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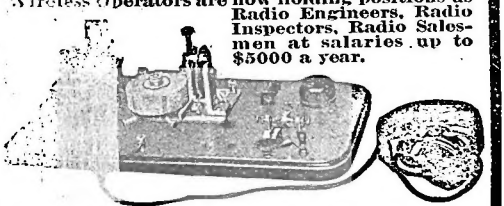

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They Laughed at My Idea—

But It Increased My Pay $8000 a Year

They told me it couldn't be done—that it was a "fool stunt." But I made up my mind to try—and I was amazed to find how easy it was. Almost before I knew it I found myself in the big money class.

By Warren Hartle

"HARTLE, you're all wrong. Take my advice and stay where you are."

"But, listen, Jim—"

"Nothing doing. You can't convince me that you can learn how to sell. If you had a Selling personality, or if you had the 'gift of gab' it might be different. But you haven't. I don't want to discourage you, but you know yourself that you were never cut out to be a Salesman. You'd just be wasting your time trying to learn. *It's a fool stunt, that's all.*"

Such was my running mate's answer when I told him that I intended to learn the Selling game. True, I didn't know the first thing about Selling, and it didn't seem as if I was cut out for it. Clerking in the railway mail service *was* far removed from selling goods, and I didn't blame Jim for trying to discourage me.

Yet I had heard of a new and easy method of learning Salesmanship that was accomplishing wonders. This amazing method disclosed the very secrets of Selling that were used by the most successful Salesmen in the country. Men who previously knew nothing about Selling were getting results that were actually astonishing.

Why, even one of my brother railroad workers, E. C. Kisler, of Rockford, Ill., who had never sold a thing in all his life, was now earning almost $100 a week as a Salesman. And then there was another fellow—a fireman—who had learned these secrets and was now making $10,000 a year! If these fellows could make good, I felt that I could too, so I determined at least to try.

My First Selling Job

From the day I began to study these wonderful secrets of Selling in my spare time, I was filled with new hope—new ambition. It seemed like no time before I had mastered them. It was then that I was informed that my first Selling job was waiting for me.

While I had always felt that these wonderful secrets would eventually make a successful Salesman out of me, I never dreamed that my success would come so soon. At the end of my first week I received a letter from my Sales Manager congratulating me on my success. I had made a record for my territory!

Each month my sales kept increasing and raises in salary seemed to follow one on the heels of another.

Into the $10,000 a Year Class

Still, I take no great credit for my sudden rise in the Selling game. What I have done anyone else can do. For instance, there is George Kearns of Oklahoma City, Kearns had never made more than $15 a week. Today he is averaging over $200 a week. Then there is P. W. Broedel of Woodhaven, N. Y., who after six months on the road was making $92 a week.

C. W. Birmingham of Dayton, Ohio, was a clerk making $800 a year. Today he is a Sales Manager and is earning $6,500 a year. J. L. Debonis was earning $15 a week as a clerk. Now he makes as high as $100 a day!

If you wish to get out of the rut and get a *real* job my advice to you is—learn these Secrets of Successful Selling. They are now revealed in full to every ambitious man by the National Salesmen's Training Association.

They require only your leisure moments in your own home, without interfering with your present work. And just as soon as you are qualified and ready you are given free access to the N. S. T. A. Employment Service, which puts you in touch with many fine Sales positions.

A Great Book on Selling Sent Free

I am authorized to state that a wonderful Book on Salesmanship will be sent absolutely free to those sending in the attached coupon. This valuable Book tells you all about the N. S. T. A. method of Salesmanship Training and Free Employment Service. In addition you will read of the big opportunities now open for YOU in the Selling game. This amazing Book is entirely free. Simply tear out and mail the attached coupon and it will be sent you at once.

NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSOCIATION
Dept. 73-S CHICAGO, ILL.

NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASS'N,
Dept. 73-S, Chicago, Ill.

Send me Free Proof that you can make me a Star Salesman and tell me how you will help me land a Selling job. Also list showing lines of business with openings for Salesmen. This does not obligate me in any way.

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Fill out the coupon, mail it. We will send you a trial size bottle. Prove our statements by restoring a single lock of hair.

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Please send me your FREE trial bottle of Mary T. Goldman's Hair Color Restorer with special comb. I am not obligated in any way by accepting this free offer. The natural color of my hair is

black_____ jet black_____ dark brown_____

medium brown_____ light brown_____

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Town_____ Co._____ State_____

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This makes a Splendid Christmas Gift

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Adventure

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NOVEMBER 10th
1921
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DEADWOOD days—a turbulent camp—and two plainsmen riding for their lives. Stampeding bison—the camps of the Sioux—and *Sitting Bull* making medicine against *Custer*. The last stand. "BAD MEDICINE," a complete novel by George Brydges Rodney, in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

Don't forget the new dates of issue for *Adventure*—three times a month, the 10th, 20th and 30th

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Adventure
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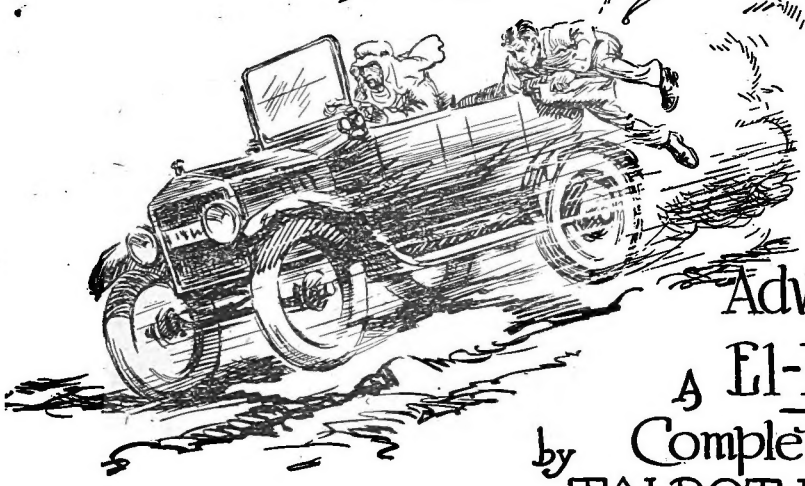
Vol. 31 No. 4



The Adventure at El-Kerak

A Complete Novel

by TALBOT MUNDY

Author of "In Aleppo Bazaar," "Guns of the Gods," etc.

"I'll try to show you a few things at first hand."

JERUSALEM is the most interesting city in the world. For one thing, it stands practically at the center of the habitable surface of the earth; therefore, men of almost every nation find their way to it; and the scale is small, so that you appreciate the mixture, instead of being overwhelmed by Little Italy, or Little Russia, as happens in enormous cities.

El-Kudz, as Arabs call the place, is supremely and sublimely beautiful, unimaginably hideous, sweet-and-evil smelling, calm and uproarious, ancient and modern, stately and ridiculous, all at any minute.

The "Parthians, Medes and Elamites" mentioned in the Bible are all there, with a new host added, all suspicious of one another, all convinced that they, and only they, are the important people, and all busy showing the other man the error of his ways—most of them talking peace, and all of them practising deadly strife. The strife is on the whole verbal and political in these days, but there are exceptions, and the jails are fairly full.

If you are historically inclined, the whole world's history seems to be connected up with every stone you touch. The religious-minded can have their pick of fifty faiths and five-hundred-thousand shrines, each proven authentic, and each disproved conclusively by the adherents of its rivals. You pay, and take your choice; but you positively pay.

As for politics, there is no brand of altruism or chicanery under the sun that has not at least one fervid propagandist there; no problem of economy that does not scream there for adjustment; no inter-racial friction that is not typified in some high- or byway of Jerusalem.

They say that wherever a man was ever slain in Palestine a flower grows. For three months of the year from end to end the country is a mass of flowers, spread in such carpets that, except where the beasts and men have trodden winding tracks, you can hardly walk without crushing an

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anemone or wild chrysanthemum. There are more battle-grounds there than all Europe and America can show, and there are streams everywhere that the historians assert repeatedly "ran blood for days."

So a few months in Jerusalem was rather like a bird's-eye view of everywhere and everything reduced to microscopic scale. It was about as difficult to form a judgment there, and to follow one line of observation, as it is to study an unfamiliar map in one of those closely printed atlases.

Whatever anybody told you was reversed entirely by the next man, except for one thing: all, including the English officers themselves, blamed the English for all evil and attributed occasional improvement to adventitious causes. But that is nothing unusual. Constant misrepresentation of their motives, ceaseless carping at their inherited defects, and everlasting blame are making the English somewhat cynical; but on the whole they bear up under it wonderfully, and even some of their enemies admit they do their best.

Any one can laugh or curse at the chaos of it all, but where to take hold of a thread and follow it to definite conclusions is a question on which there is one separate opinion apiece for every individual in the city, each one demonstrably right and all the others not only wrong but dangerous.

It was useless to try and see things through impartial eyes. I gave it up, and decided to have a good time taking any side I pleased, qualified only by the throat-distorting obligation to study Arabic. That called for rather intimate association with educated Arabs, whose main obsession was fear and hatred of the Zionist Jews. The things they said against the Jews turned me pro-Zionist; so I cautiously made the acquaintance of some gentlemen with gold-rimmed spectacles, who were nothing if not opinionative; and the things they said about Arabs set me to sympathizing with the sons of Ishmael again.

In the midst of that predicament I met Jim Grim—Major James Schuyler Grim, to give him his full title, although hardly any one ever called him by it. After that, bewilderment began to cease as under his amused, painstaking fingers, thread after thread of the involved gnarl of plots and politics betrayed its course.

There is an American colony in Jerusalem—a community concern that runs a one-price store, and is even more savagely criticized than the British Administration, as is only natural. Conceding, of course, the obvious possibility of that, they play an even straighter game than the British do, and the story of what they did in the war is a three-year epic; but people don't like war-stories just now, and that inimitable gem must wait.

The fact that a Chicago Jew assured me they were swine and horse-thieves, and that the Yemen Jews pray for them—first prayer—every Sabbath of the year, calling down blessings on their heads for charitable service rendered, seemed excuse enough for a visit, though one hardly goes all the way to Palestine to meet Americans.

THEY proved to be as generous as the Yemen Jews maintain, and sufficiently deliberately honest to account for the Chicago gentleman's assertions; not so fanatical that they do not include men and women of a dozen creeds in their unusual fold, nor so impractical that they can't skin fleas for hides and tallow—keen traders, long-sighted experts in economy, generous to a fault. Human like the rest of us, but a very clean spot in a dirty city.

So I taxed their generosity, and sat for hours on a ten-thousand-dollar pile of Asian rugs behind the store; and whatever I have missed and lost, or squandered, at least I know their story and can keep it until the proper time.

Of course, you have to allow for point of view, just as the mariner allows for variation and deviation; but when they inferred that most of the constructive good that has come to the Near-East in the last fifty years has been American, they spoke with the authority of men who have lived on the spot and watched it happen.

"You see, the Americans who have come here haven't set up governments. They've opened schools and colleges. They've poured in education, and taken nothing. Then there are thousands of Arabs, living in hovels because there's nothing better, who have been to America and brought back memories with them. All that accounts for the desire for an American mandate—which would be a very bad thing, though, because the moment we set up a government we would lose our chance to be disinterested. The country is better off under any other mandate, provided it gives

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Americans the right to teach without ruling. America's mission is educational. *There's* an American, though, who might seem to prove the contrary. Do you see him?"

Besides ourselves there were only two Arabs in the room, talking in low tones over by the window. However, I had seen Arabs in scores at Ellis Island, and most men revert to some extent to type if you put them back in the old environment. I could imagine the smaller man of the two as a peddler of lace and filigree-silver in the States, who had taken out papers for the sake of privilege and returned full of notions to exploit his mother-land. But the tall one—never. He was a Bedouin, if ever a son of the desert breathed. If he had visited the States, then he had come back as unchanged as gold out of an acid bath; and as for being born there——

"That little beady-eyed, rat-faced fellow may be American," I said. "In fact, of course he is, since you say so. But as for being up to any good——"

"You're mistaken. You're looking at the wrong man. Observe the other one."

I was more than ever sure I was not mistaken. Stately gesture, dignity, complexion, attitude—to say nothing of his Bedouin array and the steadiness with which he kept his dark eyes fixed on the smaller man he was talking to, had laid the stamp of the desert on the taller man from head to heel.

"That tall man is an American officer in the British army. Doesn't look the part, eh? They say he was the first American to be granted a commission without any pretense of his being a Canadian. They accepted him as an American. It was a case of that or nothing. Lived here for years, and knew the country so well that they felt they had to have him on his own terms."

You can believe anything in Jerusalem after you have been in the place a week or two, so, seeing who my informant was, I swallowed the fact. But it was a marvel, and seemed even greater when the man strolled out, pausing to salute my host with the solemn politeness that warfare with the desert breeds. You could not imagine that at Ellis Island, or on Broadway—even on the stage. It was too untheatrical to be acting; too individual to be imitation; too unselfconscious to have been acquired. I hazarded a guess.

"A red man, then. Carlisle for education. Swallowed again by the first desert he stayed in for more than a week."

"Not a bit of it. His name is Grim. Sounds rather like Scandinavian ancestry, on one side. James Schuyler Grim—Dutch, then, on the other; and some English. James sounds English. Ten generations in the States at any rate. He can tell you all about this country. Why not call on him?"

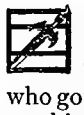
It did not take much intelligence to agree to that suggestion; but the British military take their code with them to the uttermost ends of earth, behind which they wonder why so many folk with different codes, or none, dislike them.

"Write me an introduction," I said.

"You won't need one. Just call on him. He lives at a place they call the Junior Staff Officers' Mess—up beyond the Russian Convent and below the Zionist Hospital. You may have to call repeatedly to catch him there, but the upshot may turn out to be worth the trouble."

So I went that evening, finding the way with difficulty because they talk at least eighteen languages in Jerusalem and, with the exception of official residences, no names are posted anywhere. That was not an official residence, but a sort of communal boarding-house improvised by a dozen or so officers in preference to the bug-laden inconvenience of tents—in a German-owned (therefore enemy property) stone house at the end of an alley, in a garden full of blooming pomegranates.

I sent my card in by a flat-footed old Russian female, who ran down passages and round corners like a wet hen, trying to find a man-servant. The place seemed deserted, but presently she came on her quarry in the back yard, and a very small boy in a tarboosh and knickerbockers carried the card on a tray into a room on the left. Through the open door I could hear one quiet question and a high-pitched disclaimer of all knowledge; then an order, sounding like a grumble, and the small boy returned to the hall to invite me in, in reasonably good English, of which he seemed prouder than I of my Arabic.



SO I went into the room on the left, with that Bedouin still in mind. There was only one man in there, who got out of a deep armchair as I entered, marking his place in a book with a Damascus dagger. He did not look much more

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than middle height, nor more than medium dark complexioned, and he wore a major's khaki uniform.

"Beg pardon," I said. "I've disturbed the wrong man. I came to call on an American named Grim."

"I am Major Grim."

"Must be a mistake, though. The man I'm looking for is taller than you—very dark—looks, walks, speaks and acts like a Bedouin. I saw him this afternoon in Bedouin costume in the American Colony store. They told me he lives here."

"Yes, I noticed you in there. Sit down, won't you. Yes, I'm he—the Bedouin abayi * seems to add to a man's height. Soap and water accounts for the rest of it. These cigars are from the States."

It was hard to believe, even on the strength of his straight statement—he talking undisguised American, and smiling at me, no doubt vastly pleased with my incredulity.

"Are you a case of Jekyll and Hyde?" I asked.

"I've studied Arabs. Think I know some of them better than they know themselves. But—pardon me—are you a newspaper man?"

I reassured him on that point.

"I can't be interviewed. Hate it, for one thing. For another, it wouldn't do to have a newspaper story copied into the Egyptian papers; might put the wrong gang wise. Third, and most important, it's against the regulations."

Beyond making a swift mental resolution to defy all regulations, but to change his name completely in the process, I could hardly think at all for fascination. Not that he exactly fascinated, but the change, from the Bedouin of the afternoon to the man before me, did. It was baffling, and more unbelievable the more you looked.

I could imagine him out of uniform easily enough. Then he would be simply one of half-a-million latter-day Americans, clean-shaven and clean-limbed, with that direct, quick, humorous-intelligent movement of the head and eyes that boys pick up at college even when they were not born with it as a national heritage.

His voice was not quite so harshly nasal as those of the Middle West, but he had not picked up the ultra-English drawl and clipped-off consonants that so many Americans affect abroad and overdo. For the rest, you could imagine him in almost any business office, not perhaps absolutely in control of it, but putting through big deals for some one else. Alert, good-tempered honesty was a first impression, that grew as you studied him—that and an extremely level head, on a neck that somehow suggested conscious strength conceding every reasonable claim of the other fellow. I don't think a wise crook would have chosen him as a subject for experiments.

For the rest, he had dark eyes with noticeably long lashes; heavy eyebrows; what the army-examination sheets describe as a medium chin; rather large hands with long, straight fingers; and feet such as an athlete stands on, fully big for his size, but well shaped. He was young for a major—somewhere between thirty and thirty-five.

Once he was satisfied that I would not write him up for the newspapers he showed no disinclination to talk, although it was difficult to keep him on the subject of himself, and easy to let him lose you in a maze of tribal history. He seemed to know the ins and outs of every blood-feud from Beersheba to Damascus, and warmed to his subject as you listened.

"You see," he said, by way of apology when I laughed at a string of names that to me conjured up only confusion, "my beat is all the way from Cairo to Aleppo—both sides of the Jordan. I'm not on the regular strength, but attached to the Intelligence—no, not permanent—don't know what the future has in store—that probably depends on whether or not the Zionists get full control, and how soon. Meanwhile, I'm my own boss more or less—report direct to the Administrator, and he's one of those men who allow you lots of scope."

That was the sort of occasional glimpse he gave of himself, and then switched off into straight statements about the Zionist problem. All his statements were unqualified, and given with the air of knowing all about it right from the beginning.

"There's nothing here that really matters outside the Zionist-Arab problem; but that's a big one. People don't realize it—even on the spot—but it's a world movement with ramifications everywhere. All the other politics of the Near-East hinge on it, even when it doesn't appear so on the surface; and, you see, the Jews have international affiliations through banks and

* Long-sleeved outer cloak.

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commerce and have blood-relations everywhere, so that a ripple here may be the symptom of a wave in Russia, or London, or New York. I've known at least one Arab blood-feud over here that began with a quarrel between a Jew and a Christian in Chicago."

"Are the Zionists as dangerous as the Arabs seem to think?" I asked.

"Yes and no. Depends what you call danger. They're like an incoming tide. All you can do is accept the fact and ride on top of it, move away in front of it, or go under. The Arabs want to push it back with sword-blades. Can't be done!"

"Speaking as a mere on-looker, I feel sorry for the Arabs," I said. "It's their country, and has been for several hundred years. They didn't even drive the Jews out of it; the Romans attended to that, after the Assyrians and Babylonians had cleaned up nine-tenths of the population. And at that, the Jews were invaders themselves."

"Sure. But you can't argue with tides. The Arabs are sore, and nobody has any right to blame them. The English betrayed the Arabs—I don't mean the fellows out here, but the gang at the Foreign Office."

I glanced at his uniform, for that was a strange statement coming from a man who wore it. He understood, and laughed.

"Oh, the men out here all admit it. They're as sore as the Arabs are themselves."

"Aren't you compounding treason, then?" I asked him.

"NOT on your tin-type! In a small way you might say I'm a doctor called in after a riot to stitch up cuts. It's a thankless task in a way, but it's mighty interesting. The quarrel was none of my making. I had it in for brother Turk, and lent a hand to help smash him—went behind Lawrence across the Jordan—went all the way to Damascus with him and saw the end of it."

Vainly I tried to pin him down to personal reminiscences of that greatest romance in modern history. He was not interested in his share in it.

"The British promised old king Hussein of Mecca that if he'd raise an Arab army to use against the Turks, there should be a united Arab kingdom afterward under a ruler of their own choosing. The kingdom was to include Syria, Arabia and Palestine. I understand the French agreed. Well, the Arabs raised the army; Emir Feisul, King Hussein's third son commanded it; Lawrence did the leading. The result was that Allenby could concentrate his army on this side of the Jordan and clean up. He made a good job of it. The Arabs were naturally cock-a-hoop."

I suggested that the Arabs with that great Army could have enforced the contract, but he laughed again.

"They were being paid in gold by the English, and had Lawrence to hold them together. The flow of gold stopped, and Lawrence was sent home. Somebody at the Foreign Office had changed his mind. You see, they were all taken by surprize at the speed of Allenby's campaign. The Zionists saw their chance, and claimed Palestine. No doubt they had money influence. Perhaps it was Jewish gold that paid the wages of the Arab army. Then the French recalled an old agreement and laid claim to Syria. By the time the war was over the Zionists had a hard-and-fast guarantee, the French claim to Syria had been admitted, and there wasn't any country left except some Arabian desert to let the Arabs have. That's the situation. Feisul is still in Damascus, going through the farce of being proclaimed king, with the French holding the sea-ports and getting ready to oust him. The Zionists are in Jerusalem, working like beavers, and the English are getting ready to pull out as much as possible and leave them here. Mesopotamia is in a state of more or less anarchy. Egypt is like a hot box full of explosive—may go off any minute. The Arabs would like to challenge the world to mortal combat, but don't do more than quarrel with one another. But there's lots more to it."

"And you?"

"The French, for instance. Their army is weak. They've neither men nor money—only a hunger to own Syria for the profit that might be in it. They and the English don't hit it off out here at all. The French don't play what the English call 'on side.' They play a mean game. They figure that if Feisul should attack them now he might beat them, so they've conceived the brilliant idea of spreading sedition and every kind of political discontent down into Palestine

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and across the Jordan, so that if the Arabs make an effort they'll make it simultaneously in both countries, and the English, being in the same mess with the French, will have to take their part and make a joint campaign of it."

"But don't the English know this?"

"You bet they know it. What's the intelligence for? The French are hiring all the Arab newspapers to preach against the British. A child could see it with his eyes shut."

"Then why in thunder don't the British have a show-down?"

"That's where the joke comes in—where the French have them by the short hair. The French know that there's a sort of diplomatic credo at the London Foreign Office to the general effect that England and France have got to stand together or Europe will go to pieces. They bank on that, and tread on British corns out here all they want to."

"Then the war didn't end the old diplomacy?"

"Not on your life it didn't! But I haven't more than scratched the surface yet—given you a sort of glimpse of things. There's Mustapha Kemal in Anatolia, leader of the Turkish Nationalists, no more dead or incapacitated than a 'possum. He's playing for his own hand—Kaiser Willy stuff—but he's all sewed up with Trotzky and Lenine, and flirting with Feisul's party on the side. Then there's a Bolshevist element among the Zionists—got teeth, too. There's an effort being made from India to intrigue among the Sikh troops employed in Palestine. There's a very strong party yelling for an American mandate. The Armenians, poor devils, are pulling any string they can get hold of, in the hope that anything at all may happen. The orthodox Jews are against the Zionists; the Arabs are against them both, and furious with one another. There's a pan-Islam movement on foot, and a pan-Turanian—both different, and opposed. About seventy-five per cent. of the British are as pro-Arab as they dare be, but the rest are strong for the Zionists. And the Administrator's neutral!—strong for law and order but taking no sides."

"And you?"

"I'm one of the men who are trying to keep the peace."

He invited me to stay to dinner at that point. The other members of the mess were trooping in, all his juniors, all obviously fond of him and boisterously irreverent of his rank. Dinner under his chairmanship was a sort of school for repartee, in which all official stiffness vanished in boyish comradeship. It was utterly unlike the usual British mess dinner; if you shut your eyes for a minute you couldn't believe that any one present had ever worn a uniform. I learned afterward that there was quite a little competition to get into that mess.

After dinner most of them trooped out again, to dance with Zionist ladies at an institute affair. But he and I stayed, and talked until midnight. Whether I understood him better than most, or whether he took pity on my ignorance, or simply chose to give me out of his bounty material for tales, I have never discovered. But before I left that night, the key of Palestine and Syria was in my hands.

"You seem interested," he said, coming with me to the door. "If you'd care for it, and don't mind rough spots now and then, I'll try to show you a few things at first hand."

So, whoever reads these stories will have "Jimgrim," as the Arabs call him, for a guide, and may regard me simply as recorder.

CHAPTER II

"No objection; only a stipulation."

THE showmanship began much sooner than I hoped. The following day was Sunday, and I had an invitation to a sort of semi-public tea always given by the American Colony after their afternoon service. They are a religious community, but they don't thrust opinions down other folks' throats, and their invitations are all of a social order.

They received their guests in a huge, well-furnished room on the upper floor of a stone house built around a courtyard filled with flowers; and I think they were a little proud of the number of fierce-looking Arabs, who had traveled long distances in order to be present. Ten Arab chieftains in full costume, with fifteen or twenty of their followers, all there at great expense of trouble, time and money for friendship's sake, do constitute an asset. Every member of the colony seemed able to talk Arabic like a native and, as they used to say in the upstate papers, a good time was being had by

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all. The East adores ice-cream, and there was lots of it.

Two of the Arab chiefs were Christians; the rest were not. The peace and war record of the colony was what had brought them there, hardly an Arab in the country not being the colony's debtor for disinterested help, directly or indirectly, at some time in some way. It was the one place in the country where a man of any creed could go and be sure that whatever he might say would not be used against him. So the talk ran rather high. Hot air and Arab politics have quite a lot in common. But there was a broad desert-breath about it all, rather than the little gusty yaps you hear in the city coffee-shops. A lot of the talk was foolish, but it was always magnificent.

There was one sheikh named Mustapha ben Nasir dressed in a blue serge suit and patent-leather boots, with nothing to show his nationality except a striped silk headdress with the camel-hair band around the forehead. He was a handsome fellow, with a black beard trimmed into a point, and perfect manners, polished no doubt in a dozen countries, but still Eastern in slow, deferential dignity. He could talk French, so I fell in conversation with him.

The frankness with which treason is mooted, admitted and discussed in the Near East is one of the first things that amaze you. They are so open about it that nobody takes them seriously. Apparently it is only when they don't talk treason openly that the ruling authorities get curious and make arrests. To me, a total stranger, with nothing to recommend me but that for an hour or two that afternoon I was a guest of the American colony, Mustapha ben Nasir made no bones whatever about the fact that he was being paid by the French to stir up feeling over-Jordan against the British.

"I received a monthly salary," he boasted. "I am just from Damascus, where the French liaison-officer paid me and gave me some instructions."

"Where is your home?" I asked him.

"At El-Kerak, in the mountains of Moab, across the Dead Sea. I start this evening. Will you come with me?"

Some say caution is a good thing. Others despise it. I take the normal middle view that impresses strangers as deliberation, but generally leads straight into trouble nevertheless.

"You mean, to help make it hot for the British? *Je m'en bien garderai!*"

"Oh, no. Myself, I am in favor of the British. The French pay my expenses, that is all. What we all want is an independent Arab government—some say kingdom, some say republic. If it is not time for that yet, then we would choose an American mandate. But America has deserted us. Failing America, we prefer the English for the present. Anything except France! We do not want to become a new Algeria."

"What is the condition now at El-Kerak?"

"CONDITION? There is none. There is chaos. You see, the British say their authority ceases at the River Jordan and at a line drawn down the middle of the Dead Sea. That leaves us with a choice between two other governments — King Hussein's government of Mecca, and Feisul's in Syria. But Hussein's arm is not long enough to reach us from the South, and Feisul's is not nearly strong enough to interfere from the North. So there is no government, and each man is keeping the peace with his own sword."

"You mean, each man on his own account?"

"Yes. So there is no peace. Five—fifteen—thirty throats are cut daily; and if you go down to the Jordan and listen, you will hear the shots being fired from ambush any day."

"And you invite me to make the trip with you? Very kind, I'm sure!"

"Oh, that is nothing. In the first place, you are American. Nobody will interfere with an American. They are welcome. In the second place, there is a good reason for bringing you; we all want an American school at El-Kerak."

"But I am no teacher."

"But you will be returning to America? It is enough, then, that you look the situation over, and tell what you know on your return. We will provide a building, a proper salary, and guarantee the teacher's life. We would prefer a woman, but it would be wisest to send a man."

"How so? The woman might not shoot straight? I've seen some of our Western women do tricks with a gun that would——'

"There would be no need. She would have our word of honor. But every

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sheikh who has only three wives would want to take her for his fourth. A man would be best. Will you come with me?"

"On your single undertaking to protect me? Are you king of all that countryside?"

"If you will come, you shall have an escort, every man of whom will die before he would let you be killed. And if they, and you, should all be killed, their sons and grandsons would avenge you to the third generation of your murderers."

"That's undoubtedly handsome, but——"

"Believe me, effendi," he urged, "many a soul has been consoled in hell-fire by the knowledge that his adversaries would be cut off in their prime by friends who are true to their given word."

Meaning to back out politely, I assured him I would think the offer over.

"Well and good," he answered. "You have my promise. Should you decide to come, leave word here with the American Colony. They will get word to me. Then I will send for you, and the escort shall meet you at the Dead Sea."

I talked it over with two or three members of the Colony, and they assured me the promise could be depended on.

"Besides, you ought to see El-Kerak. It's an old crusader city, rather ruined, but more or less the way crusaders left it. And that craving of theirs for a school is worth doing something about, if you ever have an opportunity. They say they have too much religion already, and no enlightenment at all. A teacher who knew Arabic would have a first-class time, and would be well paid and protected, if he could keep his hands off politics. Why not talk with Major Grim?"

It was a half-hour's walk to Grim's place, but I had the good fortune to catch him in again. He was sitting in the same chair, studying the same book, and this time I saw the title of it—Walter Pater's "Marius the Epicurean,"—a strange book for a soldier to be reading in a Jerusalem semi-military boarding-house, and cutting with an inlaid dagger. But he was a man of unexpectedly assorted moods.

He laughed when I told of ben Nasir, and looked serious when I mooted El-Kerak—serious, then interested, then speculative; from where I sat I could see the changes in his eyes.

"What would the escort amount to?" I asked him.

"Absolute security."

"And what's this bunk about Americans being welcome anywhere?"

"Perfectly true. All the way from Aleppo down to Beersheba. Men like Dr. Bliss * have made such an impression that an occasional rotter might easily take advantage of it. Americans in this country—so far—stand for altruism without ulterior motive. If we'd accepted the mandate they might have found us out! Meanwhile, an American is safe."

"Then I think I'll go to El-Kerak."

Again his eyes grew speculative. I could not tell whether he was considering me or some problem of his own.

"Speaking unofficially," he said, "there are two possibilities. You might go without permission—easy enough, provided you don't talk beforehand. In that case, you'd get there and get back; after which, the Administration would label and index you. The remainder of your stay in Palestine would be about as exciting as pushing a perambulator in Prospect Park, Brooklyn. You'd be canned."

"I'd rather be killed. What's the alternative?"

"Get permission. I shall be at El-Kerak myself within the next few days. I think it can be arranged."

"D'you mean I can go with you?" I asked, as eager as a schoolboy for the circus.

"Not on your life! I don't go as an American."

Recalling the first time I had seen him, I sat still and tried to look like a person who was not thrilled in the least by seeing secrets from the inside.

"Well," I said, "I'm in your hands."

I think he rather liked that. As I came to know him more intimately later on he revealed an iron delight in being trusted. But he did not say another word for several minutes, as if there were maps in his mind that he was conning before reaching a decision. Then he spoke suddenly.

"Are you busy?" he asked. "Then come with me."

HE PHONED to some place or other for a staff automobile, and the man was there with it within three minutes. We piled in and drove at totally unholy speed down narrow

* President of the American College at Beirut. Died 1920, probably more respected throughout the Near East than any ten men of any other nationality.

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streets between walls, around blind right-angle turns where Arab policemen stood waving unintelligible signals, and up the Mount of Olives, past the British military grave-yard, to the place they call OETA. The Kaiser had it built to command every view of the countryside and be seen from everywhere, as a monument to his own greatness—the biggest, lordliest, most expensive hospice that his architects could fashion, with pictures in mosaic on the walls and ceilings of the Kaiser and his ancestors in league with the Almighty. But the British use it now as Administration Headquarters.

All the way up, behind and in front and on either hand, there were views that millions* would give years of their lives to see; and they would get good value for their bargain. Behind us, the sky-line was a panorama of the Holy City, domes, minarets and curved stone roofs rising irregularly above gray battlemented walls. Down on the right was the ghastly Valley of Jehoshaphat, treeless, dry, and crowded with white tombs—"dry bones in the valley of death." To the left were everlasting limestone hills, one of them topped by the ruined reputed tomb of Samuel—all trenched, cross-trenched and war-scarred, but covered now in a Joseph's coat of flowers, blue, blood-red, yellow and white.

There were lines of camels sauntering majestically along three hill-tops, making time, and the speed of the car we rode in, seem utterly unreal. And as we topped the hill the Dead Sea lay below us, like a polished turquoise set in the yellow gold of the barren Moab Mountains. That view made you gasp. Even Grim, who was used to it, could not turn his eyes away.

We whirled past saluting Sikhs at the pompous Kaiserish entrance gate, and got out on to front steps that brought to mind one of those glittering hotels at German cure-resorts—a —— of a place; bad art, bad taste, bad amusements and a big bill.

But inside, in the echoing stone corridors that opened through Gothic windows on a courtyard, in which statues of German super-people stared with blind eyes, there was nothing now but bald military neatness and economy. Hurrying up an uncarpeted stone stairway (Grim seemed to be a speed-demon once his mind was set) we followed a corridor around two sides of the square, past dozens of closed doors bearing department names, to the Administrator's quarters at the far end. There, on a bare bench in a barren ante-room, Grim left me to cool my heels. He knocked, and entered a door marked "private."

It was fully half-an-hour before the door opened again and I was beckoned in. Grim was alone in the room with the Administrator, a rather small, lean, rigidly set up man, with merry fire in his eye and an instantly obvious gift for being obeyed. He sat at an enormous desk, but would have looked more at ease in a tent, or on horseback. The three long rows of campaign ribbons looked incongruous beside the bunch of flowers that somebody had crammed into a brass Damascus vase on the desk, with the estimable military notion of making the utmost use of space.

Sir Henry Kettle was certainly in an excellent temper. He offered me a chair, and looked at me with a sort of practical good-humor that seemed to say, "Well, here he is; now how shall we handle him?" I was minded to ask outright for what I wanted, but something in his attitude revealed that he knew all that already and would prefer to come at the problem in his own way. It was clear, without a word being said, that he proposed to make some sort of use of me without being so indiscreet as to admit it. He reminded me rather of Julius Cæsar, who was also a little man, considering the probable qualifications of some minor spoke in a prodigious wheel of plans.

"I understand you want to go to El-Kerak?" he said, smiling as if all life were an amusing game.

I admitted the impeachment. Grim was standing, some little way behind me and to one side; I did not turn my head to look at him, for that might have given a false impression that he and I were in league together, but I was somehow aware that with folded arms he was studying me minutely.

"Well," said Kettle, "there's no objection; only a stipulation. We wouldn't let an Englishman, go, because of the risk. All the missionaries were called in from those outlying districts long ago. We don't want to be held liable for damages for failure to protect. Such things have happened. You see, the idea is, if we

*This is no exaggeration. There are actually millions, and on more than one continent, whose dearest wish, could they have it, would be to see Jerusalem before they die.

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give you permission, the courts might assume that the obligation was on us to protect your life; whereas we assume no responsibility for what takes place beyond the Jordan and the Dead Sea. Now, if you'd like to sign a letter waiving any claim against us for protection, that would remove any obstacle to your going. But, if you think that unreasonable, the alternative is safe. You can stay in Jerusalem. Quite simple."

That had the merit of frankness, and it sounded fair enough. Nevertheless, he was certainly not being perfectly frank, for the merriment in his eyes meant something more than mere amusement. It occurred to me that his frankness took the extreme form of not concealing that he had something important in reserve, and I rather liked him for it. His attitude seemed to be that if I wanted to take a chance, I might on my own responsibility, but that if my doing so should happen to suit his plans, that was his affair. Grim was still watching me the way a cat watches a mouse.

"I'll sign such a letter," said I.

"Good. Here are pen and paper. Let's have it all in your handwriting. I'll call in a clerk to witness the signature."

I WROTE down the simple statement that I wished to go to El-Kerak for personal reasons, and that I waived all claim against the British Administration for personal protection, whether there or *en route*. A clerk, who looked as if he could not have been hired to know, or understand, or remember anything without permission, came in answer to the bell. I signed. He witnessed.

Kettle put the letter in a drawer, and the clerk went out again.

"How soon will you go?" asked Kettle.

I told him about the promised escort, and that a day or two would be needed to get word to ben Nasir; for I forgot that ben Nasir would not start until moonrise. But it seemed that Kettle knew more than he cared to admit.

"Can't we get word to ben Nasir for him, Grim?"

Grim nodded.

"Splendid. There'll be no need, then, for you to take any one into confidence," he said, turning to me again. "As a rule it isn't well to talk about these things, because people get wrong ideas. There are others in Jerusalem who would like permission to go to El-Kerak."

"I'll tell nobody."

He nodded. You could tell he was still considering things in the back of his mind, while those intelligent, bright eyes smiled so disarmingly.

"How do you propose to reach the Dead Sea?" he asked. "You know, ben Nasir's escort will probably meet you on the shore on this side."

"Oh, hire some sort of conveyance, I suppose."

"Couldn't we lend him one of our cars, Grim?"

Grim nodded again.

"We'll do that. Grim, can you get word to ben Nasir so that when the escort is ready he may send a messenger straight to the hotel with the information? D'you get my meaning?"

"Sure," said Grim. "Nobody else need know then."

"Very well," said Kettle, and rose from his chair to intimate that the precise moment had arrived when I might leave without indiscretion. It was not until I was outside the door that I realized that my permission was simply verbal, and that the only document that had changed hands had been signed by me. Grim followed me into the anteroom after a minute.

"Hadn't I better go back and ask for something in writing from him?" I suggested.

"No. You wouldn't get it. Besides, you've no call to worry; you're dealing with a gentleman. Kettle's O.K. I was afraid once or twice you might be going to ask him questions. He'd have canned you if you had. Why didn't you?"

"There's a delightful air of mystery," I said, "and I'd hate to spoil it!"

It was true, he was helping me break bounds, but I was not going to help him dissect my mental processes on that account—not if I knew it. Mystery is like drink, it begets desire for more. I decided to be mysterious too.

"Come up on the tower," he said. "There's just time before sunset. If you've got good eyes, I'll show you El-Kerak."

It is an enormous tower. The wireless apparatus connected with it can talk with Paris and Calcutta. From the top you feel as if you were seeing "all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time;" for

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there are no other buildings to cut off the view or tamper with perspective. The Dead Sea was growing dark, but the Moab Hills beyond it looked lonely and savage in silhouette.

"Down there on your left is Jericho. That winding creek beyond it is the Jordan. As far eastward as that there's some peace. Beyond that there is hardly a rock that isn't used for ambush once a week or so! Let your eye travel along the top of the hills —nearly as far as the end of the Dead Sea. Now—d'you see where a touch of sunlight glints on something? That's the top of the castle wall of El-Kerak. Judge what strategists those old crusaders were, who picked on that site. It commands the high road from Egypt; they could sit up there and take toll to their hearts' content. The Turks quartered troops in the castle and did the same thing; but they overdid it, like everything else, and ruined the trade. No road there nowadays that amounts to anything."

"It looks about ten miles away."

"More than eighty."

The sun went down behind us while we watched, and here and there the little scattered lights came out along the silent hills in proof that there were humans who thought of them in terms of home.

Venus and Mars shone forth, and hung above them in the purple sky like great yellow and red gems; and then the moon, rising like a stage effect, too big, too strongly lighted to seem real, peering inch by inch above the hills and ushering in silence. We could hear one muezzin in Jerusalem wailing that God is God.

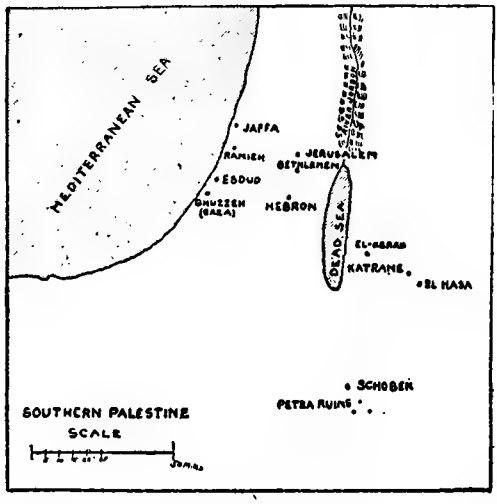
"That over yonder is a gosh-awful country," Grim remarked. "But I think maybe you'll like it. Time to go now."

He said nothing more until we were scooting downhill in the car in the midst of a cloud of dust.

"I expect you won't see me again," he said then, "until you get to El-Kerak. There are just one or two points to bear carefully in mind. D'you care if I lecture?"

"Preach away."

"WHEN the messenger comes from ben Nasir, go to the Governorate just outside the Damascus Gate, phone OETA, say who you are, and ask for the car. Travel light. The less you take with you, the less temptation there'll be to steal and that much less danger for your escort. I always take nothing, and get shaved by a murderer at the nearest village. If you wash too much, or change your shirt too often, they suspect you of putting on airs. Can't travel too light. Use the car as far as Jericho, or thereabouts, and send it back when the messenger says he's through with it. After that, do whatever the leader of the escort tells you, and you'll be all right. You needn't be afraid to trust him."



"How do I cross the Dead Sea?"

"Motor-boat probably, but that's ben Nasir's business. There's another point I'll ask you to bear in mind. When you see me at El-Kerak, be sure not to make the slightest sign of recognition, unless and until you get word from me. Act as if you'd never seen me in your life before."

"All right." I felt like an arch-conspirator, and there is no other sensation half so thrilling. The flattery of being let in, as it were, through a secret door was like strong wine.

"Is your memory good? If you make notes, be sure you let everybody see them; you'll find more than one of them can read English. If you should see or overhear anything that you'd particularly like to remember because it might prove useful to me, note it down by making faint dots under the letters of words you've already written; or—better yet—take along a pocket Bible; they're all nuts on religion; make faint pencil lines underneath words or letters, and they'll think you're more than

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extra devout, and respect you for it. There's nothing special to watch out for; just keep your ears and eyes open. Well, here's your hotel. See you again soon. So long."

I got out of the car and went to get ready for a Christian dinner served by Moslems, feeling like a person out of the Arabian Nights, who had just met the owner of a magic carpet on which one only had to sit in order to be wafted by invisible forces into unimaginable realms of mystery.

CHAPTER III

"Do whatever the leader of the escort tells you."

I NEVER learned exactly how Jim Grim got word to ben Nasir. It is not likely that he sent any government messenger to overtake him on the road, because first and last the Administration seemed determined to play 'possum, the reason for which was not far to seek after I reached El-Kerak. My suspicion is that he took the simple course of getting the American Colony to send one of their men; but as they never referred to it afterwards, and might have their own reasons for keeping silence, I took care not to ask them. We have most of us seen harm done by noisy gratitude—unwise advertisement of kindness better covered up.

I kept close to the hotel for three days, studying Arabic and picturing a thousand possibilities—tempted almost beyond endurance to go about asking questions of officers, missionaries or any one likely to have been across the Jordan. The argument was that a person sufficiently tactful to have passed the scrutiny of Jim Grim and the Administrator could be discreet enough to gather information without giving any game away. But I resisted it.

By the fourth afternoon discouragement set in. I began to believe that the whole affair had petered out; perhaps on reflection the Administrator had decided I was not a proper person to be turned loose out of bounds, and nobody could have blamed him for that, for he knew next to nothing about me. Or Grim might have been called off for some other important business. The chances seemed all against my going after all.

But on the fourth evening, just at sunset, when the sandwiches I had ordered in advance were all thoroughly stale and I had almost decided to unpack the small handgrip and try to forget the whole affair, I noticed an Arab standing in the door of the hotel scrutinizing every one who passed him. I watched him for five minutes, and noticed that he paid no attention to officers in uniform. I left my chair in the lobby and walked past him twice.

He only had one eye to see with, but that thing was like a gimlet on a universal joint, for he turned it this and that way without any corresponding movement of his head, and it penetrated. You felt he could have seen you with it in the dark, judged your character, and left you no more comfortable for the experience.

I started to pass him a third time, but he held his hand out and thrust a small, soiled piece of paper into mine. The writing on it was in Arabic, so I went back to the seat in the far corner to puzzle it out, he standing meanwhile in the doorway and continuing to quiz people as if I had meant nothing in his life. The message was short enough:

"Bearer will accompany you to a place where the escort will be in readiness. God give your honor a good journey. Mustapha ben Nasir."

I went to the Governorate and phoned for the car to come and pick me up outside the Jaffa Gate. The Arab followed me, and he and I were both searched at the gate for weapons, by a Sikh who knew nothing and cared less about disobedience to orders. His orders were to search thoroughly, and he did it. The man whose turn was next ahead of mine was a Russian priest, whose long black cloak did not save him from painstaking suspicion. He was still indignantly refusing to take down his pants and prove that the hard lump on his thigh was really an amulet against sciatica, when the car came for me.

It was an ordinary Ford car, and the driver was not in uniform. He, too, had only one eye in full commission, for the other was bruised and rather swollen. I got in beside him and let the Arab have the rear seat to himself, reflecting that I would be able to smell all the Arab sweat I cared to in the days to come.

We are governed much more by our noses than we are often aware of, and I believe that many people—in the East especially—use scent because intuition warns them that their true smell would arouse unconscious

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antagonism. Dogs, as well as most wild animals, fight at the suggestion of a smell; and humans only differ from the animals when they begin to ponder on the reason why. (Not that there are no other reasons for fighting, as transpired, for instance, presently.)

THE driver seemed to know which road to take, and to be in no particular hurry, perhaps on account of his injured eye. He was an ex-soldier, of course; they all are; one of those undersized Cockneys with the Whitechapel pallor overlying a pugnacious instinct, who make such astonishing fighting-men in the intervals between sulking and a sort of half-affectionate abuse of everything in sight. Being impatient to begin the adventure, I suggested more speed.

"Oh!" he answered. "So you're another o' these people in an —— of an 'urry to get to Jericho! It's strynge. The last one was a *H*arab. You've got a *H*arab with you. Tyke it from me, gov'nor, I've driven the very last *H*arab as gets more than twenty-five mile an hour out o' me, so 'elp me ——."

He tooled the car out on to the road toward Bethany, and down the steep hill that passes under the Garden of Gethsemane, before vouchsafing another word. Then, though, as we started to climb the hill ahead, he jerked his chin in the direction of the sharp turn we had just passed in the bottom of the valley.

"Took that corner las' time on one wheel!" he remarked.

"For the Arab?"

"Aye. Taught me a lesson, though. Never agayn! I ain't no genie out o' no Arabian Nights, nor yet no self-immolatin' 'Indoo invitin' no juggernauts to make no pancykes out o' me. 'Enceforth, I drives reasonable, and all the Arabs o' Palestine may go to —— dead-slow for all o' me."

It was clear he was itching to tell his story. And he was likely to tell it quicker for not being questioned, for your Cockney dislikes anything he can construe into inquisition. I remarked that the road didn't seem made for speed—too narrow and too rough—and let it go at that. He snorted.

He said no more until we reached the village of Bethany and drew abreast of Lazarus' reputed tomb, where a pack of scavenger-dogs awoke and yelped around the wheels.

"There they are!" he muttered. "The very same swine!" and did his best to run over one of them, but missed. Then he could not hold his story any longer.

"Two nights ago," he said, "they gives me orders to take this 'ere *H*arab to a point near Jericho. After dark, it was. I starts off with 'im on the back seat, and the engine ain't warm yet, so we goes slow. He leans forward after a couple o' minutes, an' says, '*Yalla kawam'!*,* so I thinks to myself I'll show the blighter a thing or two, me not bein' used to takin' orders from no Arabs. Soon as the engine's 'ot I lets rip, an' you know now what the road's like. When we gets to the top of that 'ill above Gethsemane I lets extry special rip. Thinks I, if you can stand what I can, my son, you've got guts.

"Well, we 'its all the 'igh places, and lands on a bit o' level road just often enough to pick up more speed—comes round that sharp bend on 'alf a wheel, syme as I told you—kills three pi-dogs for sure, an' maybe others, but I didn't dare look round—misses a camel in the dark that close that the 'air on my arms an' legs fair crawled up an' down me—'its a lump o' rock that comes near tippin' us into the ditch—an' carries on faster 'an ever. By the time we gets 'ere to Bethany, thinks I, it's time to take a look an' see if my passenger's still in the bloomin' car. So I slows down.

"The minute I turns my 'ead to 'ave a peer at 'im, 'Kawam!' 'e says. 'Quick! Quick!'

"So it strikes me I weren't in no such 'urry after all. The car's been rattlin' worse 'n a tinker's basket. I gets down to 'ave a look—lights a gasper †—an' takes my bloomin' time about it. You seen them yellow curs there by Lazarus' tomb? Well, they come for me, yappin' an' snarlin' to beat 'ell. I'm pickin' up stones to break their 'eads with—good stones ain't such easy findin' in the dark, an' every time I stoops 'alf a dozen curs makes a rush for me—when what d'you suppose? That bloomin' Arab passenger o' mine vaults over into my seat, an' afore I could say ' 'ell's bells' 'e's off. I'd left the engine runnin'. By the luck o' the Lord I 'angs on, an' scrambles in—back seat.

"I thought at first I'd reach over an' get a half-nelson on 'im from behind. But, strike me blind! I didn't dare!"

*Hurry up.

†*Anglice*—canteen cigaret.

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"LOOK where we are now. Can you see the 'air-pin turn at the bottom of this 'ill, with a ditch beyond it? Well, we takes that turn in pitch-dark shadow with all four wheels in the air, an' you'd a thought we was a blinkin' aeroplane a doin' stunts. But 'e's a *h*expert, 'e is, an' we 'olds the road. From there on we goes in one 'oly murderin' streak to a point about 'alf-way up the 'ill where the Inn of the Good Samaritan stands on top. There we 'as two blow-outs simultaneous, an' thinks I, now, my son, I've got you! I gets out.

" 'You can drive', I says, 'like Jehu son o' Nimshi what made Israel to sin. Let's see you make bricks now without no bleedin' straw'! I knew there weren't no tools under the seat—there never are in this 'ere country if you've left your car out o' your sight for five minutes. 'You take off them two back tires,' I says, 'while I sit 'ere an meditate on the ways of Arabs! Maybe you're Moses,' I says, 'an' know 'ow to work a miracle.'

"But the only miracle about that bloke 's 'is nerve. 'E gets out, an' begins to walk straight on up-hill without as much as a by-your-leave. I ain't no 'Indenburg, but there's limits. I shouts to 'im to come back, but 'e walks on; so I picks up a stone off the pile I was sittin' on, an' I plugs 'im good—'its 'im fair between the shoulder-blades. You'd think if 'e was an Arab that 'ud bring 'im to 'is senses, wouldn't you? But what d'you suppose the blighter did?

"Did you notice my left eye when you got in the car? 'E turns back, an' thinks I, 'e's goin' to knife me. But that sport could use 'is fists, an' believe me, 'e done it! I can use 'em a bit myself, an' I starts in to knock 'is block off, but 'e puts it all over me—weight, reach *an'* science. First Arab ever I see what 'ad science; an' I don't more than 'alf believe it now!

"Got to 'and it to 'im. 'E was merciful. 'E let up on me the minute 'e see I'd 'ad enough, an' starts off up-hill again. I sits where 'e'd knocked me on to a stone pile, wishin' like —— for a drink. It was full moonlight, an' you could see for miles. After about fifteen minutes, me still meditatin' murder, I seen 'em fetch a camel out o' the khan at the Inn o' the Good Samaritan; an' next thing you know, 'e's out o' sight. Thinks I, that's the last of 'im, an' good riddance! But not a bit of it!

"The men what fetched the camel for 'im comes down to me an' says the sheikh 'as left word I'm to be fed an' looked after. They fixes me up at the inn with a cot an' blankets an' a supper o' sorts, an' I lies awake listenin' to them talkin' Arabic, understanding maybe one word out of six or seven. From what I can make o' their conjecturin', they think 'e ain't no sheikh at all, but a bloomin' British officer in disguise!

"Soon as morning comes I jumps a passing commissariat lorry; and when I gets to Jerusalem I reports that sheikh for arson, theft, *felo de se*, busting a gov'ment car, usin' 'is fists when by rights 'e should ha' knifed me, an' every other crime I could think of. An' all I gets is laughed at! What d'you make of it? Think 'e was an Arab?"

I wondered whether he was Jim Grim, but did not say so. Grim had not appeared to me like a man who would use his fists at all readily; but he was such an unusual individual that it was useless trying to outline what he might or might not do. It was also quite likely that the chauffeur had omitted mention of, say, nine-tenths of the provocation he gave his passenger. What interested me most was the thought that, if that really was Jim Grim, he must have been in a prodigious hurry about something; and that most likely meant excitement, if not danger across the Dead Sea.

We caught sight of the Dead Sea presently, bowling past the Inn of the Good Samaritan and beginning to descend into the valley, twelve hundred feet below sea-level, that separates Palestine from Moab. The moon shone full on the water, and it looked more wan and wild than an illustration out of Dante's Inferno. There was no doubt how the legends sprang up about birds falling dead as they flew across it, for it was difficult to believe that anything could be there and not die. It was a vision of the land of death made beautiful.

But the one-eyed Arab on the rear seat began to sing. I suppose that to him that view meant "home, sweet home," for his song was all about his village and how he loved it—what a pearl it was—how sweeter than all cities.

" 'Ark at 'im!" The driver stopped the car to fill his pipe. "You'd think 'e lived in 'eaven! I've fought over every *h*inch o' this perishin' country, an' tyke it from me, gov'nor, there ain't a village in it but what's composed of 'ovels wi' thatched roofs, an'

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'eaps o' dung so you can't walk between 'em! Any one as wants my share o' Palestine can 'ave it!"

We bumped on again down a road so lonely that it would have felt good to see a wild beast, or an armed man lurking in wait for us. But the British have accomplished the impossible and so laid the fear of law along those roads that, though there may be murders to the right and left of them, the passer-by is safe for the first time since the Romans kept a temporary peace.

At last, like two yellow streams glistening in moonlight, the road forked—one way toward Jericho; the other way appeared to run more or less parallel with the Dead Sea. At that point the one-eyed Arab left off singing at last and clutched the driver's shoulder.

"All right! All right!" he answered impatiently, and stopped. "Out you get, then!"

He did not expect the tip I gave him, and seemed to think it placed him under the obligation to wait there and talk for a few minutes. But my one-eyed guide waved him away disgustedly with the hand that did not hold my bag, and we stood in the road watching until he vanished up-hill out of sight. Then the guide plucked my sleeve, and I followed him along the right-hand road. We walked half a mile as fast as he could set foot to the ground.

AT LAST we reached a pretense of a village—a little cluster of half a dozen thatched stone huts enclosed within one fence of thorn and cactus. Everything showed up as clearly in the moonlight as if painted with phosphorus, and the heavy shadows only made the high lights stand up more. A man and two donkeys were waiting for us outside the thorn hedge. We mounted and rode on.

Presently we turned down a track toward the Dead Sea, riding among huge shadows cast by the hills on our right hand. The little jackals they call foxes crossed our path at intervals, and owls the size of a robin, only vastly fluffier, screamed from the rocks as we passed them; otherwise, it was like a soul's last journey, eerie, lonely and awful, down toward the River Styx.

Long before we caught sight of the water again through a ragged gap between high limestone rocks I could smell another village. But the guide approached it cautiously, stopping every minute or so to listen. When we came on it at last it was down below us in abysmal darkness, one light shining through a window two feet square in proof we were not hesitating on the verge of the infinite pit.

The donkeys knew the way. They trod daintily, like little ladies, along a circling track that goats made probably, and men had certainly done nothing to improve. We made an almost complete ellipse around and down, and rode at last over dry dung at the bottom, into which the donkeys' feet sank as into a three-pile carpet. You could see the stars overhead, but nothing where we were except that window and a shaft of yellow light with hundreds of moths dazzled in it.

We must have made some noise in spite of the donkeys' velvet foot-fall, for as we crossed the shaft of light a door opened within six feet of the window, and a man in Arab déshabille with a red tarboosh awry, thrust out his head and drew it in again quickly.

"Is that the American?" he asked, holding the door so that he could slam it in our faces if required.

The guide made no answer, so I gave my name.

"*Lailtak sa'idi, effendi! Nishkur Allah!* Come in, mister!"

The guide led the donkeys to some invisible place or other, and I crossed the threshold, my host holding his tin lantern carefully to show the two steps leading down to a flag-stone floor, and bolting the door the moment I was inside. He seemed in a great state of excitement, and afraid to make any noise. Even when he shot the bolt he did it silently.

It was a square room, moderately clean and furnished only with a table and two chairs. There were others leading off it, but the stone partitions did not reach as high as the thatch and I could hear rustling, and some one snoring. I sat on one of the chairs at his invitation, and rather hoped for supper, having had none; but that was not in his mind; it seemed he had too much else to worry him. He looked like a man who worried easily, and likely enough with good reason, for his long nose and narrow eyes did not suggest honesty.

"There was to be an escort to meet me here," I said.

"Yes, yes. Thank God, mister, you have

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come at last. If you had only come at sunset! Ali has gone to bring them now."

"Who is Ali?"

"He with one eye. He who brought you. Your escort came at sunset, and because I am Christian they would not listen to me or wait for you in my house. There are twenty men under Anazeh, and he is a bad rascal. They have gone to raid the villages. There has been trouble. I have heard two shots fired. Now they will come back to my house, and if the Sikh patrol is after them they will be caught here, and I shall be accused of helping them. May the fires of their Moslem Eblis burn Anazeh and his men forever and ever, Amen!"

That was a nice state of affairs. I did not want to be caught there by a lot of truculent Sikhs under one of those jocularly incredulous young British subalterns that they adore. In the first place, I had nothing whatever in writing to prove my innocence, and the least that was likely to happen was an ignominious return to Jerusalem after a night in a guard-house. There, no doubt, Sir Henry Kettle would order me released immediately; but it began to look as if the whole mystery after all was nothing but a well-staged decoy, using me for bait. Not even tadpoles enjoy being used for live-bait without being consulted first. I began to spear about for remedies.

"If you're an honest man," I said, "you'd better simply deny all connection with the raid. Who has any right to arrest you if you're on the level?"

"Hah?"

He shrugged his shoulders. He did not look like an honest man, and knew it.

"They will have raided sheep, and perhaps cattle. If any one resisted them there will be widows wailing and crying out for vengeance. They will put the sheep and cattle in their boats in which they came over the sea this afternoon, and the boats will be found by the Sikhs hauled up on the sand-pit just below my house, with my motor-boat beside them. I am a ruined man!"

Well, my own predicament was better than that. Nobody was likely to accuse me of being party to the raid. Yet I could not feel really sorry for him, if only because he was so sorry for himself. He was one of those unfortunates who carry the conviction of their own guilt in their faces, and if I had been a judge, or on a jury trying him, he would have needed more than one good witness to corroborate even such a statement as that the next day would be tomorrow. I gave up all idea of relying on him in case the Sikhs should come.

My next idea was to ask for the loan of one of the donkeys, and start back toward Jerusalem. Anything rather than get mixed up in a blackguardly business, particularly on the wrong side of the Jordan. Rather take my chance of being robbed in the dark than that; I had not much with me that was worth a robber's trouble. But I had not more than formed that resolution when men's footsteps pattered on the yard dung, and an indubitable rifle-butt beat on the wooden door.

"FOR —— sake!" hissed the owner of the place, and ran to the door to open it before the thumping should grow louder. As he drew the bolt somebody kicked the door open, sending him reeling backwards, and for a second I thought the Sikhs had come.

But he was nothing like a Sikh who strode in, with a dozen ruffians at his tail and one-eyed Ali bringing up the rear. He was one of the finest-looking Arabs I had ever seen, although considerably past fifty and wrinkled so that his face was a net-work of fine lines, out of which his big, dark eyes shone with unaged intelligence. He was magnificently dressed, perhaps in order to do me honor. Except for the fact that he carried a modern military rifle on his elbow, in place of a shepherd's crook or a spear, he looked like one of those historic worthies who stalk through the pages of the Pentateuch. The dignity and charm with which he bowed to me were inimitable—unconveyable. But he turned on my Christian host like a prophet of old rebuking blasphemy.

Arabic sounds like tooth-for-a-tooth law being laid down when the right man uses it. Hebrew is all music and soft vowels; Arabic all guttural consonants. The Sheikh Anazeh (there was no doubt of his identity, for they all kept calling him by name) fulminated and the other bleated back at him at intervals like a rebuked serving-man in terror for his place, only to be overwhelmed again each time by more majestic Sinaitic floods.

I learned his name at last. Ali of the one eye pressed forward, took him by the sleeve, and called him Ahmed. Ali seemed to be

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adding persuasion to Anazeh's threats. Whatever it was they were driving at, Ahmed began to look like yielding, and so, as I could not untangle more than one brief sentence at a time from all those galloping arguments, I pulled Ahmed away into a corner.

"What do they all want?" I asked him. "Tell me in ten words." But he was not a brief man.

"They say the Sikhs are after them. They have put the stolen sheep in their boats, as I told you they would, mister, and now they say I must tow them with my motor-boat. But it cannot be done, mister, it cannot be done! I tell them there is a government launch near Jericho that the Sikh patrol can use to overtake us. I have a swift boat, but if I take in tow two other loaded boats we shall be caught; and then who will save everything I have from confiscation?"

"How close are the Sikhs?" I asked.

"God knows, mister! They can come fast. Unless I consent to let them use my boat, Anazeh will order his men to kill me, and then they will take the boat in any case! There is only one thing: they must leave the sheep behind and all crowd into my boat, but I cannot persuade them!"

At that moment another of Anazeh's party burst in through the door, and he evidently bore bad news. Catching sight of me, he lowered his voice to a whisper, and, whatever he said, Anazeh nodded gravely. Then the old sheikh gave an order, and four of his men came without further ado to seize Ahmed.

"Bear me witness!" the wretched man called back to me as they dragged him off. "I go under protest—most unwillingly!"

Somebody struck him with a butt-end. A woman's head appeared over the top of the partition, and began to jabber noisily. Several of Anazeh's men hurled obviously pointed jests at her, and Anazeh beckoned to me. He did not seem to doubt for an instant that I would follow him.

I was in no mind to wait there and be questioned—perhaps arrested by the Sikh patrol. I wondered whether they were coming in open order, combing the countryside, or heading all together straight for a known objective; and whether in either case I could give them the slip and get back to Jerusalem. And in that minute I recalled Grim's advice:

"Do whatever the leader of the escort tells you and you'll be all right. You needn't be afraid to trust him."

That settled it. I did not suppose for a minute that Grim had contemplated any such contingency as this; but he had volunteered the advice, so the consequences would be his affair. I followed Anazeh into outer darkness, and one of his men pulled the door to after me.

There was something very like a panic down by the waterside, three hundred yards away from the house. It needed all Anazeh's authority to straighten matters out, partly because there were still divided counsels, and because, too, the shadow of the hills fell just beyond the stern of the boats as they lay with their bows ashore, and the raiders were working in darkness.

They had forced Ahmed into his own motor-boat, where he was struggling vainly to crank a cold engine. Some of the others were trying to push off a boat full of bleating sheep. One man was carrying a fat sheep in his arms toward the motor-boat, splashing knee-deep in the water and shouting advice to everybody else, and in the end that was the only piece of plunder they got away with. Suddenly one man, who had been left behind to keep a look-out, came leaping like a ghost among the shadows, shouting the one word *"askeri!"* (Soldiers!) He jumped straight into the motor-boat, and straight away Anazeh bullied all the rest in after him. I climbed in over the bow, and by that time you could not have crowded in one more passenger with the aid of a battering ram.

"Yalla!" barked Anazeh. But the engine would not start, and the amount of advice mingled with blood-curdling threats that were hurled at the unhappy Ahmed would have rattled many a more dependable man than he. Some of the men got into the water and began to shove off, as if the engine could be encouraged by collaboration.

By that time I was just as keen as any one to escape. To have been caught in that house along with the raiders might have been bad enough, but to be seen in the boat with them—I could not imagine a Sikh or subaltern stupid enough to believe me innocent. It was a military government in Palestine just then, and soldiers have a drum-head sort of way with them that isn't comfortable while it lasts.

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I FORCED my way aft—got some gasoline out of the tank into a tin cup—thrust aside Ahmed and two other men—and primed the engine liberally. Luckily, that was the trouble and not the batteries. The engine coughed at once next time they moved the wheel, and in thirty seconds more we had it going. Ahmed came in for a volley of mockery for having to be shown the way to start his engine; but from the sour way he looked at me I was nearly sure he had stalled deliberately.

We backed away from shore, and Anazeh steered the boat's nose eastward. Then somebody at the reversing-lever threw it forward too suddenly, and the still chilled engine stopped. It took about another minute to restart it. We were just beginning to gain speed when some one shouted the alarm, and all eyes turned toward the shore, the overloaded boat rocking dangerously as the crowd bent their bodies all in one direction together.

Down near the shore-line an electric torch flashed on the uniforms of half a dozen Sikhs, and we could hear an unmistakably British voice shouting an order.

We were well out in the moonlight now, as perfect a target as any drastically-minded man could wish for, because a bullet into our midst could hardly fail to hit somebody, and two or three well placed shots would certainly sink the lot of us. But Anazeh had the presence of mind to change direction slightly, so as to present us end-on to the shore; and low in the water though the boat was, we were making good headway.

The Sikhs lost no time. Shots began to whizz overhead and splash the water all around us. But the boat was painted gray, and as we increased the distance we must have looked like a moving patch of darker water with a puzzling wake behind us. The sea was still, and the stars were reflected in it in unsteady dots and streaks. The moon cast a silver path of light that shimmered, and confused the eye; and Sikhs are not all marksmen. At any rate, the shots all missed; and though some of our party, Anazeh included, returned the fire, none boasted of having hit any one. And an Arab boasts at the least excuse.

In a few minutes we were all out of range and, since there was no pursuing launch in sight, could afford to jeer at the Sikhs in chorus. There were things said about their habits and their ancestry that it is to be hoped they did not hear, or at any rate understand, for the sake of any Arab prisoners they might take in future. It always struck me as a fool game to mock your enemy; if you fall in his power at any time he would be almost more than human if he did not remember it.

After that the only immediate danger was from the wind that sometimes blows down in sudden gusts from between the mountain-tops. It would have needed about half a sea to swamp us. But the Dead Sea was living up to its reputation, quiet, inert, like a mercury mirror for the stars—a brooding place of silence.

The Arabs' spirits rose as we chugged steadily toward their savage hills, and they began to sing. Presently Anazeh improvised an epic about the night's raid, abortive though it had been. He left out all the disappointing part, and sang first of the three shore-dwelling fools whose boats they had stolen, and of the rage of those same fools when they should learn that their property was lost forever. Then, as he warmed to the spirit of the thing, he sang about the wails of the frightened villagers from whom they had plundered sheep and goats; and of the skill and resourcefulness with which the party had escaped pursuit under his leadership, Allah favoring.

Last, he sang about me, the honored stranger, for whom they had dared everything and conquered, and whom they were taking to El-Kerak. He described me as a prince from a far country, and the son of a hundred kings.

It was a good song. I got Ahmed to translate it to me afterwards.

CHAPTER IV

"I am willing to use all means—all methods."

THE Arabs, all except Ahmed, whom experience had taught something of the Dead Sea's tricks, showed the sublime indifference to danger that always comes of ignorance. Ahmed was for running straight across to cut the voyage short, because of the wind that sometimes blows from the south at dawn. He said it might kick up a sea that would roll us over, for the weight of the Dead Sea waves in a blow is prodigious.

But they overruled his protest with loud-lunged unanimity and lots of abuse; Anazeh continued to steer a diagonal course for a

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notch in the Moab Hills that look, until you get quite close to them, as if they rose sheer out of the sea. The old man was pretty amateurish at the helm, whatever his other attainments, and our wake was like a drunkard's.

What with the danger in that overcrowded boat, and the manifestly compromising circumstance of being in company with a gang who boasted of the murder they had done that night, I admit I did some speculation that seems ridiculous at this distance. It occurred to me that Jim Grim might be disguised as a member of Anazeh's party, and as far as possible in the dark I thoroughly scrutinized each individual. It is easy to laugh afterwards, but I actually made my way to Anazeh's side and tried to discover whether the old Sheikh's wrinkles and gray-shot beard were not a very skilfully done make-up. At any rate, I got from that absurd investigation the sure knowledge that Grim was not in the boat with us.

I could not talk with Anazeh very well, because when he tried to understand my stammering Arabic and modify his flow of stately speech to meet my needs, he always put his head down, and the helm with it. It seemed wisest to let him do one unaccustomed thing at a time. And I did not care to try to talk to any of his men, because that might possibly have been a breach of etiquette, and Arab jealousy is about as quick as fulminate of mercury.

But there did not seem any objection to talking with Ahmed, who was at least in name a co-religionist, and not a person any one was likely to be jealous of. He jumped at the notion of making friends with me, and made no secret of the reason.

"You are safe, *effendi*. They will neither rob you, nor kill you, nor let you get killed. But as for me, they would cut my throat as readily as that sheep's, more especially since they have discovered you know how to start the engine. My best chance was to make them believe that the engine is difficult to understand, but because of your knowledge they now feel independent of me. So I must yield to them in everything. And if they force me to swear on a Bible, and on my father's honor, and in the name of God that I will not give evidence against them, I shall have to swear."

"An oath given under compulsion—" I began. But he laughed cynically.

"Ah! You do not know this land—these folk, *effendi*. If I were to break such an oath as that, they would burn my house, steal my cattle, ravish my wife, and hunt me to the death. If I ran away to America there might be Moslems in Chicago and New York, who would still hunt me. This is a land where an oath is binding, unless you are the stronger. And I am very weak—only an unimportant person."

"What is your business?" I asked him.

"There is no business for a man like me. The regulations forbid commerce in the only goods for which there is a real demand among Bedouins."

"So you're a smuggler, eh?"

He laughed, between pride and caution, and changed the subject.

"I shall do what they order me, *effendi*. I think they will keep my boat over there to bring you back again. But when I get back the Sikhs will arrest me; so I ask you to bear me witness that I was compelled by threats and force to go with these people. In that way I may contrive to get out of the difficulty without being punished by both Arabs and British."

I promised to tell no more than I had seen, and on the strength of that we became as fast friends as prejudice permitted, with the balance of expended effort in his favor. It suited me perfectly at the time, for he was a very good interpreter and slavishly anxious to please. But I lived to regret it later on, when my evidence had cleared him of the charge of collusion in the raid, and he chose on the strength of that to claim me as an old accomplice. That story must stand alone, though.

IT WAS just dawn when Anazeh ran the launch into a cove between high rocks, nearly making Ahmed weep at the violence done the hull. They pitched the sheep overboard to wade ashore without remembering to untie its legs, and it was nearly drowned before it occurred to any one to rescue it. Then one man held it while another cut its throat, syncopating the preliminary prayer lest death forestall the knife. I wondered, in case the sheep should actually have died of drowning, how they would have evaded the religious law; it denounces as unclean the meat of animals, whose blood did not flow from the knife, before death. They would have evaded it all right. They were more hungry than I was, and less in a mood to split fine hairs of theory.

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Meanwhile, they prayed, going first into the oily-feeling, asphaltic water for the ceremonial washing, which is not a complete bath by any manner of means; then spreading mats and facing Mecca. Every single cutthroat had brought along his prayermat, and had treasured it as carefully as his rifle.

Ahmed and I, being Christians, were not supposed to pray. We sat on a rock and watched them, and Anazeh's short preliminary sermon to his followers about the need of always keeping God in mind, was not addressed to us. Prayers finished, they proceeded to cut up and cook the stolen sheep. Ahmed and I, being Christians, ate our share of it. Ahmed said that, seeing how little was left for him when the rest had all been served, he sinned only in small degree, but that my share, as an honored guest, was huge, and the sin proportionate; so I gave him some of my meat, and he ate it, and we let it go at that.

We had hardly finished eating when an Arab on a gray horse came riding furiously down a ravine close behind us that looked like a water-course. He was brought up all-standing fifty yards away. Every man in the party leveled a rifle at him, and Anazeh beckoned me to hide behind his skirts. But after they had had a good look at him they let him draw near, and there followed a great pow-wow, the man on the horse calling on Allah repeatedly with emphasis, and Anazeh and his followers all doing the same thing, but from an opposing viewpoint. I persuaded Ahmed to go up close and listen.

"The man is from El-Kerak," he said presently, while they all still fought with words, using tremendous oaths by way of artillery. "A council of the tribes has been summoned to meet there, but each sheikh is only to take two men with him, because of the risk of fighting among themselves. Anazeh says there can be no proper council without him, and that he will attend it; but as for taking only two men, he has pledged his word to escort you with twenty men to El-Kerak, and he will carry out the pledge even if he has to fight the whole way there and back again!"

Anazeh suddenly cut short the war of words with a gesture such as that with which Joshua made the sun stand still. He tossed a curt order to one of his men, who went off at a run toward a village, whose morning smoke rose blue over a spur of the range a mile way. Then Anazeh sat down to await events, and took no more notice of the horseman's arguments.

That did not feeze the horseman much. He kept on arguing. Every few minutes one of Anazeh's men would go to him and repeat some tid-bit, as if the old sheikh had not heard it; but all he got for his pains was a gesture of contemptuous dismissal.

Ahmed kept growing more and more uncomfortable all the time. He had attended to his boat, making it properly fast and covering the engine, under the eyes of four men who were at pains to see that he did not crank up and desert; now he was back beside me, trying to bolster up his own courage by making me afraid.

"They have determined to take me along with them to prevent me from escaping," he complained. "That man on the horse is saying that if more men go than Anazeh and you and two others, there will certainly be fighting. And Anazeh answers, he has pledged his word. Can you not say something to persaude Anazeh?"

I would rather have tried to persuade a tiger. Short of knocking the old raider on the head and standing off his twenty ruffians afterward, I could not imagine a way of turning him from his set purpose. And at that, I had not a weapon of any kind. I was the goods, and the game old sportsman intended to deliver me, right side up, perhaps, but all in one piece and to the proper consignee.

"I don't see anything to worry about," said I.

"Wait till you hear the bullets!" Ahmed answered.

Nevertheless, bullets or no bullets, I did not see what I could do about it; and I thought again of that advice of Jim Grim's: "Do what the leader of the escort tells you." Besides, you could not feel really sorry for Ahmed in any circumstances, he was not that kind of man.

It was not more than half-an-hour before I saw led horses coming in our direction from the village. At sight of them the man on the gray horse lost heart, and with a final burst of eloquence, in which he spread his breast to heaven and shook both fists in witness that he was absolved and no blood-guilt could rest on his head, he rode away at top speed straight up the ravine down which he originally came.

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THE horses proved to be a very mixed lot—some good, some very bad, and some indifferent. But again they treated me as honored guest and provided me a beast with four sound legs and nothing much the matter except vice. She came at me with open teeth when I tried to mount, but four men held her and I climbed aboard.

That was the worst saddle I ever sat in—and Anazeh's second-best! The stirrups swung amidships, so to speak, and whenever you tried to rest your weight on them for a moment they described an arc toward the rear. Moreover, you could not sit well back on the saddle to balance matters, because of the high cantle. The result was torture, whether you did with stirrups or without them, for anybody but an Arab, who has notions of comfort all his own.

They put Ahmed on a wall-eyed scrub that looked unfit to walk, but proved well able to gallop under his light weight. One of Anazeh's men took my bag, with a nod to reassure me, and without a word we were off full-pelt, Anazeh leading with four stalwarts who looked almost as hard-bitten as himself, six men crowding me closely, and the remainder bringing up the rear.

That is the Arab way of doing things—rush and riot to begin with. The steepness of the stony ravine we rode up soon reduced the horses to a walk, after which there was a good deal of attention to rifle-bolts, and a settling down to the more serious aspects of the adventure. The escort began to look sullenly ferocious, as only Arabs can.

There was a time when Cook's Agency took tourists in parties to El-Kerak, and all the protection necessary was a handful of Turkish soldiers, whose chief employment on the trip was to gather fuel and pitch tents. But the war has changed all that. They will shoot a stranger nowadays for the sole-leather on his boots and count it no crime, but God-sent opportunity.

We passed by a village or two, tucked into folds in the hills and polluting the blue sky with a smell of ageing dung, but nothing seemed disposed to happen. A few men stood behind stone walls and stared at us sullenly. The women looked up from their grindstones at the doors, covered their face for convention's sake, and uncovered them again at once for curiosity. There was nothing you could call a road between the villages, only a rocky cattle-track that seemed to take the longest possible way between two points; and nobody seemed to own it, or be there to challenge our right of way.

But suddenly, after we had passed the third village and were walking the horses up a shoulder of a steep hilltop, three shots cracked out from in front of us to left and right. Nobody fell, but if ever there was instantaneous response it happened then. Anazeh and his four galloped forward up-hill, firing as they rode for the cover of a breast-high ridge. One man on the off-side tipped me out of the saddle, so suddenly that I had no chance to prevent him; another caught me, and two others flung me into a hole behind a stone. I heard the rear-guard scatter and run. Two men pitched Ahmed down on top of me, for he was valuable, seeing he could run an engine; and thirty seconds later I peered out around the rock to get a glimpse of what was happening.

There was not a man in sight, although I could see some of the horses standing under cover, and the firing was so rapid it sounded almost like machine-gun practise. But a hairy arm reached out and pushed my head back, and after that, whenever I made the least movement, a man who was sniping from behind the sheltering rock swore furiously, and threatened to brain me with his butt-end. Beyond all doubt they regarded me as perishable freight; so I hardly saw any of the fighting.

Judging by the sound, I should say they fought their way up-hill in skirmish order, and when they got to the top the other side—whoever they were—took to flight. But that is guess-work. There were two casualties on our side; one man shot through the arm, which did not matter much, and another pretty seriously in the jaw. They came to me, for they all believe every white man knows something about surgery and physic, and I had a bad time bandaging both of them, using two of my handkerchiefs and strips from the protesting Ahmed's shirt.

When Anazeh shouted at last and we all rode to the hill-top there was a dead man lying there, stripped naked, with his throat cut across from ear to ear; and one of our men was wiping a long knife by stabbing it into the dirt. There was also a led horse added to the escort. Anazeh looked very cool and dignified; he had an extra rifle now, slung by a strap across his shoulders, and was examining a bandolier that had blood on it.

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WE RODE on at once, and for the next hour Ahmed was kept busy interpreting to me the lies invented by every member of the escort for my especial benefit. If they were true, each man had slain his dozen; but nobody would say who the opposing faction were. When I put that question they all dried up and nobody would speak again for several minutes.

It turned out afterward that there had been a sort of armistice proclaimed, and all the local chiefs had undertaken to observe it and cease from blood-feuds for three days, provided that each chief should prove peaceful intention by bringing with him only two men. Three men in a party, and not more than three, had right of way. The engagement may have been a simple protest against breach of the terms of the armistice, but I suspect there was more than that in it.

At any rate, we were not attacked again on the road, although there were men who showed themselves now and then on inaccessible-looking crags, who eyed us suspiciously and made no answer to the shouted challenge of Anazeh's men. When the track passed over a spur, or swung round the shoulder of a cliff, we could sometimes catch sight of other parties—always, though of three, before and behind us, proceeding in the same direction.

We sighted the stone walls of El-Kerak at about mid-afternoon, and rode up to the place through a savage gorge that must have been impregnable in the old days of bows and arrows. It would take a determined army to-day to force itself through the wadys and winding water-courses that guard that old citadel of Romans and crusaders.

We approached from the north-west corner, where a tower stands that they call the Burj-ez-Zahir. There were lions carved on it, and it looked as if the battlements had been magnificent at one time; but whatever the Turks become possessed of always falls into decay, and the Arabs seem no better.

Beside the Burj-ez-Zahir is a tunnel, faced by an unquestionably Roman arch. Outside it there were more than a dozen armed men lounging, and a lot of others looked down on us through the ruined loopholes of the wall above. Their leader challenged our numbers at once, and refused admission, and judging by Anazeh's magnificently isolent reply it looked at first as if he intended fighting his way in. But that turned out to be only his diplomatic manner—establishing himself, as it were, on an eminence from which he could make concessions without losing dignity.

The arrangement finally agreed to was Anazeh's suggestion, but showed diplomatic genius on both side. The old man divided up his party into sets of three, and asserted that every set of three was independent. There were twenty-two of us all told, including Ahmed, but he described Ahmed as a prisoner, and offered to have him shot if that would simplify matters. There was a great deal of windy discussion about Ahmed's fate, during which his face grew the color of raw liver and he joined in several times tearfully. Once he was actually seized and half a dozen of the town guards drew back their breech-bolts; but they compromised finally by letting him go in with hands tied behind him. Nobody really wanted the responsibility of shooting a man who had smuggled stolen cartridges across the Dead Sea, and might do it again if allowed to live.

We rode for eighty or a hundred paces through an echoing tunnel into a city of shacks and ruined houses that swarmed with armed men, and it was evident that we were not the only ones who had ignored the rule about numbers. Anazeh explained in an aside to me that only those would obey that rule who did not dare break it.

"Whoever makes laws should be strong enough to enforce them," he said sagely. "And whoever obeys such a law is at the mercy of those who break it," he added presently, by way of afterthought.

EVERY house had its quota of visitors, who lounged in the doorways and eyed us with mixed insolence and curiosity. There were coffee-booths all over the place that seemed to have been erected for the occasion, where, under awnings made of stick and straw, men sat with rifles on their knees. Those who had provender to sell for horses were doing a roaring trade—short measure and high price; and the noise of grinding was incessant, for the women in the back streets were toiling to produce enough to eat for all that host of notables.

To have had to hunt for quarters in that town just then would have been no joke. There was the mosque, of course, where any Moslem who finds himself stranded may

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theoretically go and sleep on a mat on the floor. But we rode by the mosque, and I would not have liked a contract to crowd one more man in there for any rate of pay. The babel coming through the open door was like the buzzing of flies on a garbage heap.

I was trying to sit upright in that abominable saddle and look dignified as became an honored guest with a twenty-man escort, when a courteous-looking cutthroat wearing an amber necklace worth a wheat-field, forced his way through a crowd and greeted Anazeh like a long-lost brother. I examined him narrowly to make sure he was not Jim Grim in disguise, but he had two fingers missing, and holes in his ears that decided that question.

After he had welcomed me effusively he led us through a rat-run maze of streets to a good-sized house with snub-nosed lions carved on the stone door-posts and a lot of other marks of both Roman and crusader. No part of the walls was less than three feet thick, although the upper story had been rebuilt rather recently on a more economical and much less dignified scale. Nevertheless there was a sort of semi-European air about the place, helped out by two casemented projections overhanging the narrow street.

There was no need to announce ourselves, supposing the clatter of hoofs and shouts to ordinary folk on foot to get out of the way had not done that already. Sheikh ben Nazir opened the door in person, and his welcome was the sort that comes to mind when you read the Bible story of the prodigal son returning from a far-off country. I might have been his blood-relation.

He was no longer in blue serge and patent-leather boots, but magnificent in Arab finery, and tricked out in a puzzling snowy-white head-dress that suggested politics without your knowing why. He had told me when I met him at the American Colony that he had made the pilgrimage to Mecca more than once, but that white linen thing had nothing to do with his being a *hajj*, any more than the expensive rings on the fingers of both hands had anything to do with his Arab nationality.

After he had flattered and questioned me sufficiently about the journey to comply with etiquette I asked him whether Ahmed might not be untied, for the thong was cutting the man's wrists. He gave the order, and it was obeyed at once. The liquid-eyed rascal with the priceless amber necklace then led away the escort, Ahmed included, to some place where they could stall the horses, and—side-by-side, lest any question of precedence should be involved, Anazeh and I followed ben Nazir into the house.

We were not the only guests there by any means. He ushered us into a square room, in which outrageous imported furniture with gilt and tassels on it contrasted with rugs and cushions fit for the great Haroun-al-Raschid's throne room. There were half a dozen Arabs reclining on two Louis-something-or-other settees, who rose to their feet as we entered; and there was one man, sitting on a cushion in a corner by himself, who did not get up. He wore a white head-dress exactly like our host's, and seemed to consider himself somebody very important indeed, for after one swift, searching glance at us he went into a brown study, as if a mere sheikh and a Christian alien were beneath his notice.

We were introduced first of all to the men who had stood up to greet us, and that ceremony took about five minutes, because the Arab believes he ought to know all about how you feel physically, and expects you to reciprocate. When that was over ben Nazir took us to the corner and presented, first me, and then Anazeh to the man in the white head-dress, who seemed to think himself too important to trouble about manners.

Anazeh did not quite like my receiving attention first, and liked still less the offhanded way in which the other received us. We were told his name was Suliman ben Saoud, after which Anazeh turned on his heel and joined the other guests.

In some vague way I knew that ben Saoud was a name to conjure with, although memory refused to place it; but the man interested me as much by his indifference and apparently unstudied insolence. Presuming on the one thing that I felt quite sure of by that time—my privileged position as a guest—I stayed, to try to draw him out, trying him with English, French, and finally lame Arabic. He took no apparent notice of the French and English, but smiled sarcastically at my efforts with his own tongue.

Ben Nazir, seeming to think that Anazeh's ruffled feelings called for smoothing, crossed the room to engage him in conversation, so I was left practically alone with the strange individual; and, more or less in

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a spirit of defiance of his claim to such distinction, I sat down on a cushion beside him.

HE WAS a peculiar-looking man. The lower part of his cheek—that side on which I sat—was sunk in, as if he had no teeth there. The effect was to give his whole face a twisted appearance. The greater part of his head, of course, was concealed by the flowing white *kaffiyi*, but his skin was considerably darker than that of the Palestine Arab, and he had no eyebrows at all, having shaved them off—for a vow I supposed. Instead of making him look comical, as you might expect, it gave him a very sinister appearance, which was increased by his generally surly attitude.

Once again, exactly as when I had entered the room, he turned his head to give me one swift, minutely searching glance, and then turned his eyes away again as if he had no further interest. They were quite extraordinary eyes, brimful of alert intelligence; and whereas from his general appearance I should have set him down at somewhere between forty and fifty, his eyes suggested youth, or else that keen, unpeaceful spirit that never ages.

I tried him in Arabic again, but he answered without looking at me, in a dialect I had never heard before. So I offered him a gold-tipped cigaret, that being a universal language, but he waived the offer aside with something between astonishment and disdain. He had lean, long-fingered hands, entirely unlike those of the desert fraternity, who live too hard and fight too frequently to have soft, uncalloused skin and unbroken finger-nails.

He did not exactly fascinate me. His self-containment was annoying, for it seemed intended to convey an intellectual and moral importance that I was not disposed to concede to any one not from the West. I suppose an Arab feels the same sensation when a Westerner lords it over him on highly moral grounds. At any rate, something or other in the way of pique urged me to stir him out of his self-complacency, just as you feel urged to prod a pelican behind the bars and make him strut about.

But although he seemed to understand my remarks—for he did not take the trouble to hide his amusement at my efforts with the language—he only answered in monosyllables, and I could not understand those. So after about five minutes I gave it up, and crossed the room to ben Nazir, who seized the opportunity to show me the sleeping-quarters I was to have.

It proved to be a room like a monastery cell, up one flight of stone stairs, with two other rooms of about the same size on either side of it. At the end of the passage was a very heavy wooden door, with an iron lock and an enormous key-hole, which I suppose shut off the harem from the rest of the house; but as I never trespassed beyond it I don't know. I only do know that a woman's eye was watching me through that key-hole, and ben Nazir frowned impatiently at the sound of female giggling.

"The Sheikh Anazeh will have the room on this side of you," he said, "and the Sheikh Suliman bin Saoud the room on the other. So you will be between friends."

"Suliman bin Saoud seems a difficult person to make friends with," I answered.

Ben Nazir smiled like a prince out of a picture-book—beautiful white teeth and exquisite benignance.

"Oh, you mustn't mind him. These Arabs from the center of Arabia give themselves great airs."

I sat on the bed—quite a civilized affair and spotlessly clean; so he sat on the only chair, I suppose, like the considerate host he was, to give me the sensation of receiving in my own room.

"He wears the same sort of head-dress you do. What does it mean?"

"I wear mine out of compliment to him—not that I have not always the right to wear it. It is the Ichwan head-dress. It is highly significant."

"Of what?"

He hesitated for a moment, and then seemed to make up his mind that it did not much matter what he might divulge to an ignorant stranger soon to return to the United States.

"It is difficult to explain. You Americans know so little of our politics. It is significant, I might say, of the New Arabia—Arabia for the Arabs. The great ben Saoud, who is a relative of this man, is an Arabian chieftain who has welded most of Arabia into one, and now challenges King Hussein of Mecca for the caliphate. Hussein is only kept on his throne by British gold, paid to him from India. Ben Saoud also receives a subsidy from the British, who must continue to pay it, because otherwise

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ben Saoud will attack Hussein and overwhelm him. That, it is believed, would mean a rising of all the Moslem world against their rulers—in Africa—Asia—India—Java—everywhere. It began as a religious movement. It is now political—although it is held together by religious zeal. You might say that the Ichwans are the modern Protestants of Islam. They are fanatical. The world has never seen such fanaticism, and the movement spreads day by day."

"You don't look like a fanatic," I said, and he laughed again.

"I? God forbid! But I am a politician; and to succeed a politician must have friends among all parties. My one ambition is to see all Arabs united in an independent state reaching from this coast to the Persian Gulf, and to that end I devote my energy and use all means available—including money paid me by the French, who have no intention of permitting any such development if they can help it."

"And the British?"

"For the present we must make use of them. But their yoke must go too; if not just yet, eventually."

"Then if America had accepted the Near East mandate, you would have used us in the same way?"

"Certainly. That would have been the easiest way, for America understands little or nothing of our politics. I am willing to use all means—all methods to the one end—Arabia for the Arabs. After that I am willing to retire into oblivion."

Nevertheless, he did not convince me that he was an altruist, who had no private ends to serve.

CHAPTER V

"D'you mind if I use you?"

FOR all his care to seem hospitable before any other consideration, Ben Nazir looked ill at ease. He led me down again to a dining-room hung with spears, shields, simitar and ancient pistols, but furnished otherwise like an instalment-plan apartment, and watched while a man set food before me. It seemed that Anazeh had gone away to eat somewhere with his men.

His restlessness became so obvious that I asked Ben Nazir at last whether I was in his way. He jumped at the opening, and asked me to excuse him for the remainder of the afternoon.

"You see," he explained, "I came from Damascus to Jerusalem, so I was rather out of touch with what was going on here. This conference of notables was rather a surprize to me. It does not really take place until tomorrow, but there are important details to attend to in advance. If you could amuse yourself——"

The man who could not do that in a crusader city crammed with sons of Ishmael, who looked as if they had stepped straight out of the pages of the Old Testament, would be difficult to please. I asked for Ahmed, to act as interpreter, and he volunteered to provide me with two men in addition as a sort of bodyguard.

"Because Ahmed is a man without authority anywhere."

It did not take ten minutes to produce Ahmed and the two men. The latter were six-foot, smiling veterans armed with rifles and long knives, and with them at my heels I set out to explore the town.

"There is nothing to see," said Ahmed, who did not want to come. But Ahmed was a liar. There was everything to see.

The only thing I had really in mind was to find Jim Grim. It was possible I might run across him somewhere, and recognize him even through his disguise. Failing that, he could not help but notice me if I walked about enough; and after that I did not doubt he would find some way of establishing communication.

But you might as well have hunted for one particular pebble on a beach as for a single individual in all that throng. Remembering Grim's disguise when I first saw him, I naturally had that picture of him in mind; but all the Bedouins looked about as much alike as peas in a pod, and I soon discovered that, although they stared at me as if I were a curio on exhibition, they did not like being stared back at.

There was no hint of violence or interference, and no apparent resentment of an alien's presence in their midst. The loud-lunged bodyguard shouted out to all and sundry to make way for the "Amerikani," and way was made forthwith, although several times the bodyguard was stopped and questioned after I had passed, to make sure I was really American and not English. Ahmed assured me that if I had been English they would have "massacred me," as

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he put it, and in view of what transpired he may have been right, though I doubt it. They might have held me as hostage.

Not that they were in any kind of overtolerant mood. There was a man's dead body hanging by one foot from a great hook on a high wall, and the wall was splattered with blood and chipped by bullets. I asked Ahmed what kind of criminal he might be.

"He did not agree with them. They are for war. He was in favor of peace, and he made a speech two hours ago. So they accused him of being a traitor, and he was tired and condemned."

"Who tried him?"

"Everybody did."

"War with whom?" I asked.

"The British."

"Why?"

"Because they favor the Zionists."

"And that is what the conference is all about?"

"Yes. There is a man here from Damascus, who urges them to raid across the Jordan into Palestine. He says that the Palestinian Arabs will rise then, and cut the throats of all the Zionists. He says that Emir Feisul is going to attack the French in Syria, and that the British will have to go and help the French, so now is the time for a raid."

"Is my host, ben Nazir, the man who is talking that way? He has been to Damascus."

"No. Another, named Abdul Ali—a very rich sheikh, who comes here often with caravans of merchandise, and gives rich presents to the notables."

"Has ben Nazir anything to do with it?"

"Who knows? *Mashallah!* That ben Nazir is a knowing one. They say of him, whichever opinion is uppermost that is always his opinion, and he is a safe man to follow for that reason. Yet it is easier to follow water through a channel underground."

WE MADE our way toward the castle at the south side of the town, but were prevented from entering by a guard of feudal retainers, who looked as if they had been well drilled. They were as solemn as the vultures that sat perched along the rampart overlooking a great artificial moat dividing the town from the high hill just beyond it.

Nobody interfered when I climbed on the broken town wall and looked over. The castle wall sloped down steeply into the moat, suggesting ample space within for dungeons and underground passages, but there was nothing of interest to see; only dead monkeys, a dying camel with the vultures already beginning on him, some dead dogs, heaps of refuse, and a lot more vultures too gorged to fly—the usual Arab scheme of sanitation. I asked one of the bodyguard to shoot the camel and he obliged me, with the air of a keeper making concessions to a lunatic. Nobody took any notice of the rifle going off.

It was when we turned back into the town again that the first inkling of Grim's presence in the place turned up. A bulky-looking Arab in a sheepskin coat that stank of sweat so vilely that you could hardly bear the man near you, came up and barred the way. Barring the smell, he was a winning-looking rascal—truculent and swaggering, but possessed of a good-natured smile that seemed to say, "Sure, I'm a ruffian, but what do you expect!"

He spoke perfectly good English, and said he wanted to speak to me alone. That was easy enough; Ahmed and the bodyguard withdrew about ten paces, and he and I stepped into a doorway.

"I am Mahommed ben Hamza," he said, with his head on one side, as if that explanation ought to make everything clear to me at once. "From Hebron," he added, when I did not seem to see the light.

I tried to look extremely wise, and said nothing. There was no sense in squandering spoken wisdom on a stranger.

"Where is Jimgrim?" he asked.

"If you can tell me that I'll give you ten piastres," I answered.

"I will give you fifty if you tell me!"

"Why do you want to know?"

"He is my friend. He said I should see him here. But I have not seen him. He said also I should see you. You are the Amerikani? And you don't know where he is? Truly? Then, when you see him, will you say to him, 'Mahommed ben Hamza is here with nine men at the house of Abu Shamah?' Jimgrim will understand."

I nodded, and the man from Hebron walked away without another word.

"Did he steal your watch?" asked Ahmed. They are as jealous as children, those Arabs.

There was a second execution while I

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walked back through the city. A wide-eyed, panic-stricken poor devil with slobber on his jaws came tearing down-street with a mob at his heels. We stepped into an alley to let the race go by, but he doubled down the alley opposite. Before he had run twenty yards along it some one hit the back of his head with a piece of rock. A second later they had pounced on him, and in less than a minute after that he was kicking in the noose of a hide rope slung over a house-beam. But I don't know what they hanged him for.

I kept on looking for Jim Grim, although the task seemed hopeless, because, of course, I could not give a hint of my real purpose. But as Grim knew that the talk about a school-teacher was my passport to the place, it seemed possible that he might use that as an excuse for getting in touch with me. So I told Ahmed to show me the schools.

But there were only tumble-down places where Moslem boys were taught to say the Koran by heart. The places where missionaries had been were all turned into stores, and even into stables for the horses of notables.

So I returned to ben Nazir's house, and found old Sheikh Anazeh sitting outside on the step, as motionless as a tobacco-store Indian and twice as picturesque. He still had his rifle over his knees, and the other slung over his shoulder by a strap; he never stirred abroad without them.

I asked him what the conference of notables was going to be about, and he told me to mind my own business. That struck me as an excellent idea, so, not having slept at all the previous night, I went upstairs and lay on the bed. There was no lock on the door, so I set the chair against it.

Ben Nazir was a man who had traveled a great deal, and picked up western notions of hospitality to add to the inborn eastern sense of sacredness in the relation between host and guest. It seems that an hour or two later he came to take me down to a Gargantuan meal, but, feeling the chair against the door, and hearing snores, he decided it was better manners to let me lie in peace.

So I did not wake up again until after midnight. The moonlight was streaming through a little high-perched window, and fell on the white-robed, ghostly-looking figure of a man, who sat with crossed legs on the end of the bed. I thought I was dead and in hell.

That is no picturesque exaggeration about a man's hair standing when he is terrified. It really does. I would have yelled aloud, if the breath would have come, but there is a trick of sudden fear that seems to grip your lungs and hold them impotent. The thing on the end of the bed had no eyebrows, and it grinned as if it knew all about evil, and were hungry, and living dead men were its food.

I DON'T know how long I stared at the thing, but it seemed like a week. At last it spoke, and I burst into a sweat with the reaction.

"Good job you don't know how to fasten a door with a chair. I 'low I'll have to show you that trick. Sh-h-h! Don't make a noise!"

I sat up and looked more closely at him. It was the Ichwan of the afternoon—Sheikh Suliman bin Saoud. And he was not speaking English, but unmistakable American. I began to believe I was dreaming, but he chuckled quietly and lit a cigaret.

"Aren't you hep yet?"

"Not Grim?"

"Who else?"

"But what's happened to your face? You're all one-sided."

"Oh, that's easy. I just take my false teeth out. The rest is done with a razor and some brown stain. Say: I thought you were going to spot me down-stairs there and make some kind of break. You hadn't a notion, had you?"

"No. Looked all over town for you afterward."

"Yey. Thought that was too natural to be acting. Pick up any news in town?"

"Sure. Met a man who calls himself Mahommed ben Hamza. He's waiting at the house of Abu Shamah."

"Good. Any men with him?"

"Nine."

"Three better than he promised. Ben Hamza is the most honest thief and dependable liar in Palestine—a rascal from the word go, but he sticks closer than a brother. He's a cheerful murderer. I saved him once from being hung because he smiles so nicely, and he has been useful ever since. We're going to need him. Any more news?"

"I expect none that you don't know. There 's a sheikh named Abdul Ali from Damascus, preaching a raid into Palestine."

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Grim nodded.

"I'm here to bag that bird."

"Where do I come in?" I asked.

"Aren't you wise to that yet? You're the excuse for old Anazeh's twenty men. Two might not have been enough, even with ben Hamza and his nine."

"Then our host ben Nazir is in on the game?"

"Not he! Up at headquarters we knew all about this coming conference. The only way to reduce pressure here is to pull the plug—Abdul Ali. We knew we could count on old Anazeh, but the puzzle was how to find an excuse for him to take the gang along. When you told me ben Nazir had invited you I saw the way to do it. There wasn't anybody else except Anazeh that ben Nazir could have sent to fetch you, and the old boy's a friend of ours."

"That did not stop him from raiding two villages on the British side," I said.

"D'you mean he did that?"

"Sure. I had part of a raided sheep for breakfast."

"Um-m-m! Well of all the —— I didn't think he had the imagination! He figured we can't get after him for it, seeing how he's playing our game at this end. —— old horse-thief! Well, he gets away with it. You'll have to be mighty careful now that you know who I am not to seem to recognize me. One slip and we're done for. You're probably safe enough, but if they once get wise to me they'll pull me in pieces between four horses."

"I'll take care. What's your plan?"

"It's vague yet. Got to be an opportunist. I'm supposed to be a member of the bin Saoud family, recruiting members for the new sect—biggest thing in Arabia. As long as I can carry on the bluff it's a cinch, but heaven help me once anybody calls it! I'm invited to the conference on the strength of my supposed connection with the big Ichwan movement."

"D'you propose to murder this Abdul Ali person, then, or have him murdered?" I asked.

"Uh-uh! Murder's out of my line. Besides, that'ud do no good. Worse than useless. They'd all cut loose. Abdul Ali has got them together, and what with bribes and a lot of promises he has got them keen on this raid. If he were killed they'd say one of our spies did it, and they'd add venegance to their other motives, which at present are mainly a desire for loot. No, no. Abdul Ali has got to disappear. Then they'll believe he has betrayed them, and instead of raiding they'll confiscate his property and curse his ancestors. D'you see the point?"

"Yes. But I don't see what good I can do."

"That's coming. D'you mind if I use you?"

"Seems to me you've done it, and you'd do it again," I laughed. "Why trouble to ask permission?"

"Oh, well. You know the hangmen always used to beg the victim's pardon. Shall I go ahead?"

"I'll do what I can."

"Where you can fit into the puzzle is by rooting for the school idea. The worst robber chieftain from the farthest cluster of huts he calls his home town would like to see an American school here in El-Kerak. If there were one he'd send his sons to it."

"I'll root like a dog for a buried bone."

"Go to it. That gives you right to ask questions. That will oblige ben Nazir to introduce you to any one you want to interview. That will explain without any further argument whatever weakness you seem to have for talking to men in the street like Mahommed ben Hamza. It would even explain away any politeness that I might show you in my capacity of Ichwan. For safety's sake, and to create an impression, I take the line of being rude to every one; but I might reasonably toss a few crumbs of condescension to an altruist from foreign parts. At any rate, I'll have to take that chance. D'you get me?"

"You mean, you'll use me as intermediary? Messages to and from ben Hamza and that sort of thing?"

"THAT'S the idea, but there's more to it. Did you bring that Bible along? Are you superstitious? Any notions like Long John Silver's about its being bad luck to spoil a Bible? All right. Keep it in your pocket to make notes in; and if you can't get the whole book to me, tear a page out and send that, or give it to me, with the message spelled in dots under the words. Make the dots faint, I've got good eyes."

"All right. But you're still staging a mystery. What sort of notes d'you want from me?"

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"You mustn't mistake me for the prophet Ezekiel," he answered smiling. "'Thus saith the Lord' is all right when you know just what you're talking about. All I know for certain is that I've got to bag Abdul Ali. If you get information that looks important to you, get it to me in that way, that's all. Don't run unnecessary risks by being caught talking to me any more than can possibly be helped."

"What else?"

"If you get the chance, keep old Anazeh sober."

"Oh!"

Grim nodded meaningly.

"I've known simpler and less dangerous jobs!"

"The old sport thinks no more of me than of an express package he'd been hired to deliver," I answered. "Drunk or sober, he'd brush me aside like a fly."

"Well—wits were given us to use. I guess you'll have to use yours. I've seen more difficult things done."

"I'll use my wits," I said, "on your responsibility. If you find yourself in the way of a bullet, or dancing on nothing in a raw-hide necklace, or being boiled in oil, don't blame *me*."

"Very well."

"What else besides being dry-nurse to the king of the Amalekites?"

"Don't trust that fellow Ahmed."

"He's a good interpreter."

"Yeh—and a poor peg. You'll have to use him—some. But all you can really count on when your back's turned is his squeal."

"Does Anazeh know you in that disguise?" I asked.

"No, and he mustn't. I'll tell you why. All these people are religious fanatics, and a horrible death is the only fate they would consider for a man caught masquerading as a holy personage the way I'm doing. But their fanaticism has a way of petering out when the gang's not there to see. In his own village I think Anazeh would laugh if I talked this ruse over with him—afterwards. But if he knew about it here, with all these other fanatics alert and fanning, he wouldn't dare not expose me. It's a good job you asked that. If I send any message to Anazeh through you, be sure you don't give me away."

"How shall I make him believe the message is from you, then?"

"Begin with 'Jimgrim says.' He'll recognize the formula. But if he questions that, say 'A lion knows a lion in the dark.' That'll serve a double purpose—convince him and jog his memory. He ignored a request of mine—once, and I was able to get back at him. Tell you the story some day. Nowadays he's more or less dependable, unless he gets a skin-full of red-eye. Well, make the most of your chance to sleep; you may have to go short later. I'm going to saw off a cord or two myself."

He left the room as silently as a ghost; and I don't doubt he slept peacefully, for subsequent acquaintance with him convinced me that he can go to sleep almost anywhere in any circumstances. And that is a very great gift, for it enables its owner to wear down any dozen who must sleep for stated hours at fixed intervals. Grim snatches his whenever the chance comes, and goes without with apparently perfect indifference. He told me once that he dreams nearly all the time he is asleep, but the dreams don't seem to trouble him.

MY OWN sleep was done for that night, his advice notwithstanding. I lay listening to Anazeh's thunderous snores and naturally enough imagining every possible contingency and dozens that were totally impossible. In the event, nothing turned out in the least like any of my forecasts; but that was not for want of trying to foresee it all, for I don't seem to possess any of that quiet gift of waiting to deal with each development on its merits, as and when it comes. I have to speculate, and that process is the enemy of peace.

Looking back, I don't think I felt a bit afraid of the immediate future; but that was due to ignorance of nearly all that the present held. I think that was part of Grim's reason for helping me to reach El-Kerak in the first place; he counted on my ignorance of danger to keep me cool-headed. It is true, it did dawn on me that if my host were to suspect me of intriguing under cover of his protection, the protection might cease with disconcerting abruptness, and I realized to some extent what a predicament that would be. But on the whole, I think the only real worry was the only definite task Grim had given me—the thankless, and very likely desperate, inglorious one of trying to keep old Anazeh sober.

Of course, the Koran forbids wine. But

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whisky is not wine. And if you mix whisky and wine together they cease to be either, but become a commodity of which the Prophet knew nothing whatever; so that whatever he had to say in the Koran could not be construed to apply to any such compound as that.

But if you introduce such a mixture into the stomach, and thence into the brain of an already fiery Bedouin; and then introduce the Bedouin to trouble; and if, in addition to the trouble, you provide impertinent, alien, and what he calls infidel restraint, it is fair to presume that the mixture might explode.

It seemed to me I had been given too much to do. In order to get introductions to the notables I must first get ben Nazir into a proper frame of mind. Then, stammering in an alien tongue, I must make friends with chieftains who had never even heard of me; and that, when their minds were busy with another matter. I must keep in touch with ben Hamza, and convey his messages to Grim without being seen or arousing suspicion. In addition to all that I must keep sober by some means an old savage armed with two rifles and a knife, who had twenty cutthroats at his beck and call!

While I pondered the problem in all its impossible bearings, loud snores to right and left of me, tenor and bass by turns, announced that Jim Grim and Anazeh were as blissfully oblivious to my worries as the bed-bugs were that had come out of hiding and discovered me. I began to feel homesick.

CHAPTER VI

"That man will repay study."

I GOT my first shot at Anazeh at dawn, when the muezzin began wailing over the city; and I missed badly with both barrels. The old sheikh looked into my room, presumably to see if I was still alive, since he had guaranteed to see me safely back again across the Jordan, before rounding up his rascals for morning prayer. They prayed together whenever possible, Anazeh keeping count of their genuflexions.

You could tell he had been drinking the night before the minute he thrust his head into the room. He smelt like the lees of a rum barrel, and the rims of his eyes were red.

Seeing I was awake he gave me the courteous, full-sounding *"Allah ysabbhak bilkhair,"* and I asked him where he had dined the night before. He mumbled something into his beard that I could not catch, but he could not have told me much more plainly to go to ——, even in plain English. However, I had to get a foothold somewhere, so I said I had heard that the liquor in El-Kerak was poisonous.

As far as I understood his answer, he implied that it likely would be poisonous in the sort of place where I would buy it, but that he, Anazeh, need not be told how to suck eggs by any such greenhorn as me.

I tried him again. I said that liquor taken in quantity would kill a man.

"So will one bullet!" he answered. "But, whereas a bullet in the belly causes pain before death, *moiyit ilfadda* (*aqua fortis*) causes pleasure; and a man dies either way."

He turned to go, rattling two rifle-butts against the door, but I had one last try to get on terms and said I hoped to see him at breakfast, or shortly afterward.

"God is the giver both of eyesight and the things to see," he answered. "I go to pray. God will guide my footsteps afterward."

I did not feel I had really made much headway, but fared rather better with my host downstairs, who either did not pray with such enthusiasm or else had forestalled the muezzin. At any rate, he was waiting for me near a table spread with sweet cakes and good French coffee.

After the usual string of pleasantries he became suddenly confidential, over-acting the part a little, as a man does who has something rather disagreeable up his sleeve that he means to spring on you presently.

"I have been busy since an hour before dawn. I have been consulting with my friend Suliman ben Saoud. The situation here is very serious. As long as you are my guest you are perfectly safe; but if I were to send you away, the assembled notables might suspect you of being a spy, and might accuse me of harboring a spy. Do you see? They would suppose you were returning to Jerusalem with information for the British. That would have most unpleasant consequences—for both of us!"

Clearly, Grim in the guise of ben Saoud had been busy, and it was up to me to seize my cue alertly. I was at pains to look alarmed. Ben Nazir grew solicitous.

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"Rest assured, you are safe as my guest. But Suliman ben Saoud was annoyed to think a stranger should be here at such a time as this. He took me to task about you. He is also my guest, as I reminded him, but he is a truculent fellow. He insisted that the assembled notables have the right to satisfaction regarding your *bona fides*. It was no use my saying, as I did repeatedly, that I personally guarantee you; he asked me how much I know about you, and I had to confess that it amounts to very little."

"Well?" I said. "What does the old grouch want?"

"He thinks that you should be presented to the assembled notables at noon today. In fact, he is going to demand that. He thinks they should catechise you regarding your ideas about a school."

"Nothing objectionable that I can see in that," I said.

"But, I am sorry to have to add this: it is probable the notables will insist on your remaining in El-Kerak until after that shall have taken place which they have been summoned to decide on. They will not risk your returning before the——"

"Before what?"

"The—ah—they contemplate a raid!"

"So I'm a prisoner?"

"No, no! *Mon dieu*, what do you think of me! Even the fanatical Suliman ben Saoud saw the force of the argument when I spoke of the sanctity of any guest here on my invitation. But he thinks—and I agree with him, that as a precaution you should first call on Sheikh Abdul Ali. You will find him a very agreeable man, who will receive you with proper courtesy. He is here from Damascus, and exercises a great influence. Once his mind is at ease about you, he will satisfy all the others. Are you agreeable?"

"Why not?"

So we smoked a cigaret together after the coffee, and then set forth on foot, for the distance was not great, preceded and surrounded by armed retainers. I imagine the armed men were more for the sake of appearance than protection, for ben Nazir seemed popular enough; but they drove other pedestrians out of the way as roughly as they did the unspeakable dogs that infested every offal-heap. The street that we followed was, of course, the open sewer for the houses on either hand, and its condition was a credit to the mangy curs that so resented our intrusion.

ABDUL ALI'S house, if his it was, was a fairly big square building near the middle of the town. It did not look unlike one of the old-time New York precinct stations, with its big windows protected by iron grilles, and a flight of stone steps leading up to a door exactly in the middle of the front wall.

There were thirty or forty capable-looking men hanging about the place, for Abdul Ali owned more than one camel caravan, and every man connected with the business looked on himself as a member of one big feudal family. They were all armed, and most of them had modern rifles.

We were admitted into a room that faced on the street, furnished entirely in the eastern style, except for two gilt chairs against the wall. The walls were hung with carpets and the floor was covered with Bokhara rugs three deep.

No doubt in order to emphasize his own importance, Abdul Ali kept us waiting in that room for ten minutes before he condescended to enter. But when he did come at last he was at pains to seem agreeable, which was not quite his natural attitude.

I had never seen a more offensive personality, although at the first glance he did not arouse comment. The distaste dawned, and grew. He was certainly not physically attractive, although the Syrian Arab costume made him picturesque. The first thing I noticed was the fatness of his hands —those of a giver of dishonest gifts; when he shook hands you felt in some subtle way that he would purchase your honor for any reasonable figure, and that he was conscious of possessing ample funds for the purpose.

He was a little puffy under the eyes, had a firm mouth, but rather thick lips, and his small black mustache was turned up like the Kaiser's, which gave him an appearance of authority. For the rest, he was a rather military-looking person, although his flowing robe partly concealed that; stockily rather than heavily built; and of rather more than middle height. He wore one ring—a sapphire of extraordinary brilliance, of which he was immensely proud. When I noticed it he said at once that it had been given him by the late Sultan Abdul Hamid.

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He spoke German from choice, so we conversed in German, which annoyed ben Nazir, who could not understand a word of it. And from first to last throughout that interview, and subsequently to the point where Jim Grim out-maneuvered and outplayed him, he relied on the German philosophy of self-assertion that teaches how to get and keep the upper hand by making yourself believe in your own super-intelligence and then speaking, acting, making plans in logical accord with that belief. It works finely until somebody spoils the whole thing by pricking the super-intelligence bladder and letting out all the wind.

Although he spoke German, he was not by any means pro-German in his motives, and was at pains to make that clear. Evidently he had not been above suspicion always, and was conscious of the need to offset past prejudices before suggesting his enormous ability along advanced lines.

"You come at an interesting time," he said. "You find us in transition. Before the war, and almost until the end of it, most Arabs believed in the German destiny. English gold commanded the allegiance of an Arab army, but every last man in that army was ready to follow the German standard at the proper time. That only shows how ignorant these people are. As soon as it became evident that the Arab destiny lies in the hands of Arabs themselves most of them immediately began to clamor for an American mandate, because that would give them temporary masters who could protect them, yet at the same time who would be too ignorant of real conditions to prevent secret preparations for a pan-Arabian revolt. All very absurd of course."

SHE HAD no idea how absurd he himself appeared, as he launched into a tirade designed to make him seem a super-statesman in the eyes of a stranger who did not care what he was. The more he talked himself into a delirium of self-esteem the less his character impressed me. I even ran into the danger of under-estimating him because he liked himself so much.

"I'm here to look into the prospects for a school," I said.

"Yes, yes. Very estimable. You shall have my support."

He paused for me to fawn on him, and my neglect to do it spurred him to further self-revelation.

"You must look to me for support if you hope for success. There is no cohesion here without me. I am the only man in El-Kerak to whom they all listen, and even I have difficulty in uniting them at times. But a school is a good idea, and under my auspices you will succeed."

For the moment I thought he suspected me of wanting to teach school myself, and hastened to correct the impression.

"All I promise to do is to tell people in the States who might be interested."

"Exactly." He had been coming at this point all along in his own way. "So there is no hurry. It makes no difference that you must stay in El-Kerak a little longer than you intended. You shall be presented to the council of notables under my auspices. But you must not go back immediately afterward. In my judgment it is important that you remain here for some little time."

I suppose the men who can analyze their thoughts, and separate the wise impulses from the rash ones, are the people whom the world calls men of destiny and history assigns to its halls of fame. The rest of us simply act from pique, prejudice, passion or whatever other emotion is in charge. I know I did. It was resentment. It was so immensely disagreeable to be patronized by this puffy-eyed sensualist that I could not resist the impulse to argue with him.

"I don't see the force of that," said I. "My plans are made to return to Jerusalem tomorrow."

I could not have done better as it happened. I suppose there is some philosophy that has been written down in books that would explain how such things work, at any rate to the satisfaction of the fellow who wrote the book. But Grim, referring to it afterward, called it naked luck; and I would rather agree with him than spend too many hours with the philosopher. I can stand Bill Nye and Burroughs and Will Beebe, but luck looks to me like a sweeter lady than most of the goddesses they picture nowadays and then dissect in clinics. At any rate, by naked luck I prodded Abdul Ali where he kept his supply of mistakes; and instead of calling my bluff, as he doubtless should have done, he set out to win me over to his point of view. Whichever way you analyze it in the light of subsequent

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events, the only possible conclusion is that it was my turn to be lucky and Abdul Ali's to make a fool of himself. Nobody could have done that better.

"I must dissuade you from that," he said, trying to hide wilfulness under an unpleasant smile. "I will offer you inducements."

"They'll have to be heavy," I said, "to weigh against what I have in mind."

He had kept ben Nazir and me standing all this time. Now he offered me one of the chairs, took the other himself, and motioned ben Nazir to a cushion near the window. A servant brought in the inevitable coffee and cigarets. Then he laid a hand on my knee for special emphasis—a fat, pale, unprincipled hand, with that great sapphire gleaming on the middle finger.

"It happens that this idea of a school comes just at the right moment. I have been searching my mind for just some such idea to lay before the notables. As we are talking a language that none else here understands, I can safely take you into confidence. A raid is being planned into British territory."

He paused to let that sink in, and tapped my knee with his disgusting fingers until I could have struck him from irritation.

"There is, however, an element of disagreement. There is uncertainty as to the outcome, in the minds of some of the chiefs who live nearest to the border. The feeling among them is that perhaps I am urging them on in order to serve my own ambition at their expense. They appreciate the opportunity to loot; but they say that the British will hit back afterwards, and they, being nearest to the border, will suffer most; whereas I stand to gain all and to lose nothing. Very absurd, of course, but that is their argument."

"Surely," I said, "you don't expect me to take my coat off and preach a *jihad* against the British?"

"*Im Gotteswillen!* No, no, no! This is my meaning: if I can go before them with the offer of a school for El-Kerak, which the very worst scoundrel among them desires with all his ignorant heart; and if I can produce a distinguished gentleman from America, present among them on my invitation for the sole purpose of making the arrangements for such a school, that will convince them that I have their interests really at heart. Do you see?"

Again the irritating fingers drumming on my knee. I did not answer for fear of betraying ill-temper.

"I am a statesman, sir. I understand the arguments with which whole nations may deceive themselves. I have made it my profession to detect the trends of thought and the tides of unrest. Psychological moments are for me a fascinating study. I can recognize them."

HE LAID the fat hand on my shoulder for a change, and tried to look into my eyes; but I was watching the edge of a curtain at the far end of the room.

"Now, to you, an American, our local disputes mean nothing. This raid is no affair of yours. You wash your hands of it. You, an altruist, are interested only in a school. I offer you opportunity, building, subsidy, guarantees. You reciprocate by giving me a talking point. I shall make use of the opportunity. That is settled. And, let me see, I promised you inducements, didn't I?"

He looked at me and I looked at him. He waited for a hint of some sort, but I made no move to help him out.

"What shall we say?"

I was as interested in the result of his appraisal as he was in making it. Whether complimentary or not, another's calculated judgment of your character is a fascinating thing to wait for.

"I think you will be getting full value. I shall introduce you to all the notables," he said at last. "To a man of your temperament it will be a privilege to attend the council, and to know in advance all that is going to happen. There will be no objection to that, because it is already decided you will remain in El-Kerak until after the —er—raid. The notables will understand from me that your mouth is sealed until after the event. You shall be let into our secrets. There—is that not equitable?"

It was shrewd. I did not believe for a minute that he would let me into all their secrets, but he could not have imagined a greater temptation for me. Since I would not have taken his word that black was not white, I did not hesitate to pretend to agree to his terms.

"I must have an interpreter," I said. "Otherwise I shall understand very little."

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"I will supply you an interpreter—a good one."

"No, thank you. Any man of yours might only tell me what he thought correct for me to hear. If I'm to get a price for my services, I want the full price. I want to hear everything. I must be allowed to bring my own interpreter."

"Who would he be?"

"I don't know yet."

"That man Ahmed, for instance? I have been told he is of your party. Ahmed would do very well."

"No, not Ahmed."

"Who then?"

"I will find a man."

He hesitated. If ever a man was reviewing all the possible contingencies, murder of me included, behind a mask of superficial courtesy, that man was he.

"He should be a man acceptable to the notables," he said at last. "I ought to know his name in advance."

"I must have unfettered choice, or I won't attend the *mejlis*."*

"Oh, very well. Only the interpreter, too, will have to remain afterward in El-Kerak."

I looked at that curtain again, for it was moving in a way that no draft from the open window could account for. But at last the movement was explained. Before Abdul Ali could speak again a man stepped out from behind it, crossed the room, and went out through the door, closing it silently behind him. He was a man I knew, and the last man I had expected to see in that place. I suppose Abdul Ali noticed my look of surprize.

"You know him?" he asked.

"By sight. He was at Sheikh ben Nazir's house yesterday."

"That is Suliman bin Saoud, a stranger from Arabia, but a man of great influence because of his connection with the Ichwan movement. If you are interested in our types that man will repay study."

"Good. I'll try to study him," said I.

It was all I could do to keep a straight face. So Jim Grim was the source of Abdul Ali's inspirations! I wondered what subtle argument he could have used to make the sheikh so keen on baiting his hook with the school proposal. His nerve, in waiting behind that curtain until he knew his scheme had succeeded, and then walking out bold as brass to let me know that he had overheard everything, was what amused me. But I managed not to smile.

"What time is the *mejlis?*" I asked.

"At noon."

"Then I'll go and hunt up my interpreter."

BEN NAZIR came out with me, in a blazing bad temper. He was as jealous as a pet dog, and inclined to visit the result on me.

"Very polite, I am sure! Most refined! Most courteous! In your country, sir, does a guest reward his host for hospitality by talking in a language that his host can't understand? Perhaps you would rather transfer your presence to Abdul Ali's house? Pray do not consider yourself beholden to me, in case you would prefer his hospitality!"

I tried in vain to pacify him. I explained that the choice of language had been Abdul Ali's, and offered to tell him now in French every word that had passed. But he would not listen.

"It would not be difficult for a man of your intelligence to make up a story," he said rudely. "Abdul Ali can talk French. If it had been intended that I should know the truth that conversation would have been in French. Shall I send your bag to Abdul Ali's house?"

"No," I said. "Give it to Anazeh. He is answerable for my safety until I reach Palestine again. Thank you for a night's lodging."

He walked away in a great huff, and I set out for the house of Abu Shamah, using my scant store of Arabic to ask the way. Mahommed ben Hamza was lolling on the stone veranda, gossiping with half-a-dozen men. He came the minute I beckoned him.

"I've seen Jimgrim," I said. "You're to come with me at noon to the *mejlis* as my interpreter."

He grinned delightedly.

"And see here, you smelly devil: here's money. Buy yourself a clean shirt, a new coat, and some soap. Wash yourself from head to foot, and put the new clothes on, before you meet me at the castle gate ten minutes before noon. Those are Jimgrim's orders, do you understand?"

"*Taht il-amr!* (Yours to command!)" he answered laughing.

* Council.

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I went and bought myself an awful meal at the house of a man who rolled *kabobs* between his filthy fingers.

CHAPTER VII

"Who gives orders to me."

THE wonderful thing about that country is that everything happens in a story-book setting, with illustrations by Maxfield Parrish and Wyeth and Joe Coll, and all the rest of them, whichever way you look. You realize that the illustrators really do know something actual after all.

Imagine a blue sky—so clear-blue and pure that you can see against it the very feathers in the tails of wheeling kites, and know that they are brown, not black. Imagine all the houses, and the shacks between them, and the poles on which the burlap awnings hang, painted on flat canvas and stood up against that infinite blue. Stick some vultures in a row along a roof-top—purplish-bronze they'll look between the tiles and sky. Add yellow camels, gray horses, striped coats, long rifles, and a searching sun-dried smell. And there you have El-Kerak, from the inside.

From any point along the broken walls or the castle roof you can see for fifty miles over scenery invented by the Master-Impresario, with the Jordan like a blue worm in the midst of yellow-and-green hills twiggling into a turquoise sea.

The villains stalk on-stage and off again sublimely aware of their setting. The horses prance, the camels saunter, the very street-dogs compose themselves for a nap in the golden sun, all in perfect harmony with the piece. A woman walking with a stone jar on her head (or, just as likely, a kerosene can) looks as if she had just stepped out of eternity for the sake of the picture. And not all the kings and kaisers, cardinals and courtezans rolled into one great swaggering splurge of majesty could hold a candle to a ragged Bedouin chief on a flea-bitten pony, on the way to a small-town *mejlis*.

So it was worth a little inconvenience, and quite a little risk to see those chiefs arrive at the castle gate, toss their reins to a brother cut-throat, and swagger in, the poorest and least important timing their arrival, when they could, just in advance of an important man so as to take precedence of him and delay his entrance.

Mindful of my charge to keep Anazeh sober, and more deadly afraid of it than of all the other risks, I hung about waiting for him, hoping he would arrive before Abdul Ali or ben Nazir. I wanted to go inside and be seated before either of those gentry came. But not a bit of it. I saw Anazeh ride up at the head of his twenty men, halt at a corner, and ask a question. His men were in military order, and looked not only ready but anxious to charge the crowd and establish their old chief's importance.

Mahommed ben Hamza, not quite so smelly in his new clothes, was standing at my elbow.

"Sheikh Anazeh beckons you," he said.

So the two of us worked our way leisurely through the crowd toward the side-street down which Anazeh had led his party. We found them looking very spruce and savage, four abreast, drawn up in the throat of an alley, old Anazeh sitting his horse at their head like a symbol of the ancient order waiting to assault the new. My horse was close beside him, held by Ahmed, acting servitor on foot.

The old man let loose the vials of his wrath on me the minute I drew near, and Mahommed ben Hamza took delicious pleasure in translating word for word.

"Is that the way an *effendi* in my care should be seen at such a time—on foot? Am I a *maskin** that you do not ride? Is the horse not good enough?"

I made ben Hamza explain that I was to attend the *mejlis* as Sheikh Abdul Ali's guest. But that only increased his wrath.

"So said ben Nazir! Shall a lousy Damascene trick me out of the keeping of an oath? You are in my safe-keeping until you tread on British dirt again, and my honor is concerned in it! No doubt that effeminate schemer of schemes would like to display you at the *mejlis* as his booty, but you are mine! *Mashallah!* Did you think you are not under obligation to me?"

I ANSWERED pretty tactfully. I said that Allah had undoubtedly created him to be a protector of helpless wayfarers and the very guardian of honor. Mahommed ben Hamza added to the compliments while rendering mine into Arabic. But though Anazeh's wrath was somewhat mollified, he was not satisfied by any means.

* Poor devil.

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"Am I a dog," he demanded, "that I should be slighted for the sake of that Damascene?"

It looked to me like the proper moment to try out Grim's magic formula.

"You are the father of lions. And a lion knows a lion in the dark!" said I.

The effect was instantaneous. He puffed his cheeks out in astonishment, and sucked them in again. The overbearing anger vanished as he leaned forward in the saddle to scrutinize my face. It was clear that he thought my use of that phrase might just possibly have been an accident.

"Jimgrim says——"

"Ah! What says Jimgrim? Who are you that know where he is?"

"A lion knows a lion in the dark!" I said again, that there might be no mistake about my having used the words deliberately.

He nodded.

"*Mashallah!* What says Jimgrim?"

"Jimgrim says I am to keep by Anazeh and watch him, lest he drink strong drink and lose his honor by becoming like a beast without decency or understanding!"

"Mount your horse, *effendi*, and sit beside me," he answered.

I complied, and ben Hamza took the place of Ahmed, who went to the rear, looking rather pleased to get out of the limelight.

"What else says Jimgrim?" asked Anazeh.

"There will be a message presently, provided Sheikh Anazeh keeps sober!"

To say that I was enjoying the game by this time is like trying to paint heaven with a tar-brush. You've got to be on the inside of an intrigue before you can appreciate the thrill of it. Nobody who has not had the chance to mystify a leader of cheerful murderers in a city packed with conspirators, with the shadow of a vulture on the road in front, and fanged death waiting to be let loose, need talk to me of excitement.

"Well and good," said Anazeh. "When Jimgrim speaks, I listen!"

Can you beat that? Have you ever dreamed you were possessed of some magic formula like "Open Sesame," and free to work any miracle you choose with it? Was the dream good? And I was awake—on a horse—in a real eastern alley—with twenty thieves as picturesque as Ali Baba's, itching for action behind me!

"Abdul Ali of Damascus thinks he will enter the *mejlis* last and create a great sensation," said Anazeh. "But he deceives himself; for I shall enter last, and I shall bring you. There will be no doubt who is most important!"

Just as he spoke there clattered down the street at right angles to us a regular cavalcade of horsemen led by no less than Abdul Ali with a sycophant on either hand. Cardinal Wolsey, or some other wisehead, once remarked that a king is known by the splendor of his servants, and those two parasites were dressed for the part in rose-colored silk and mounted on beautiful white Arab horses so severely bitted that they could not help but prance.

Abdul Ali, on the other hand, played more of a king-maker's rôle, dark and sinister in contrast to their finery, on a dark brown horse that trotted in a business-like, hurry-up-and-get-it-done-with manner. He rode in the German military style, and if you can imagine the Kaiser in Arab headdress, with high black riding boots showing under a brown cloak, you have his description fairly closely. The upturned mustaches and the scowl increased the suggestion, and I think that was deliberate.

"A dog—offspring of dogs! Curse his religion and his bed!" growled Anazeh in my ear.

The old sheikh allowed his enemy plenty of time. To judge by the way the men behind us gathered up their reins and closed in knee-to-knee, they would have liked to spoil Abdul Ali's afternoon by riding through his procession and breaking its formation. But Anazeh had his mind set, and they seemed to know better than to try to urge him. We waited until noises in the street died down, and then Ahmed was sent to report on developments.

"Abdul Ali has gone into the *mejlis* and the doors are closed," he announced five minutes later.

THAT seemed to suit Anazeh perfectly, for his eyes lit up with satisfaction. Evidently being excluded from the council was his meat and drink. He gave no order, but rode forward and his men followed as a snake's tail follows its head, four abreast, each man holding his rifle as best suited him; that gave them a much more warlike appearance than if they had imitated the western model of exact conformity.

We rode down-street toward the castle at a walk, between very interested spectators

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who knew enough to make way without being told. And at the castle gate we were challenged by a man on foot, who commanded about twice our number of armed guards.

"The hour is passed," he announced. "The order is to admit no late-comers."

"Who gives orders to me?" Anazeh asked him.

"It was agreed by all the notables."

"Nay, that it was not, for I did not agree to it!"

"Nevertheless——"

"Open that gate!"

They opened it. Two of the men began to do it even before their chief gave the reluctant order. Anazeh started to ride through with his men crowding behind. But that, it seemed, was altogether too much liberty to take with the arrangements. Shouting all together, the gate-guards surged in to take hold of bridles and force Anazeh's dependants back. Teeth and eyes flashed, and it looked like the makings of a red-hot fight.

"No retainers allowed within the gate! Principals only!" roared the captain of the guard.

Anazeh, Mahommed ben Hamza and I were already within the courtyard, and four of the men made their way through after us before any one could prevent them. At that moment there came a tremendous clattering of hoofs and the crowd outside the gate scattered this and that way in front of about a hundred of the other chiefs' dependents, who had dutifully stayed outside and had sought shade some little distance off.

Whether the sudden disturbance rattled him, or whether he supposed that all the other truculent ruffians were going to try to follow our example, at any rate the man on duty lost his head and shouted to his men to shut the gate again. Before they could do it every one of Anazeh's gang had forced his way through, and there we all were on forbidden ground, with a great iron-studded gate slammed and bolted behind us. To judge by the row outside the keepers of the gate had got their hands full.

In front of us was a short flight of stone steps, and another great wooden door set in stone posts under a Roman arch. There were only two armed men leaning against it, and they eyed Anazeh and our numbers nervously.

"Open!"

Anazeh could use his voice like a whip-crack. They fumbled with the great bolt and obeyed, swinging the door wide. I thought for a minute that my arrogant old protector meant to ride up the steps and through the door into the *mejlis* hall with all his men; but he was not quite so high-handed as that.

After a good long look through the door, I suppose to make sure there was no ambush inside waiting for him, he dismounted, and ordered his men to occupy a stable-building across the courtyard, from which it would have been impossible to dislodge them without a siege. Then, when he had seen the last man disappear into it, he led me and Mahommed ben Hamza up the steps.

Ben Hamza was grinning like a schoolboy, beside himself with delight at the prospect of elbowing among notables, as well as inordinately proud of his new clothes and the smell of imported soap that hung about him like an aura. But Anazeh looked like an ancient king entering into his own. Surely there was never another man who could stride so majestically and seem so conscious of his own ability to override all law.

We passed under the shadowy arch and down a cool stone passage to yet another heavy door that barred our way. Anazeh thundered on it with his rifle-butt, for there were no attendants there to do his bidding. There was no answer. Only a murmur of voices within. So he thundered again, and this time the door opened about six inches. A face peered through the opening cautiously, and asked what he wanted.

"What is this?" asked Anazeh. "Is a *mejlis* held without my presence? Since when?"

"You are too late!"

The face disappeared, and some one tried to close the door. But Anazeh's foot prevented.

"Open!" he demanded, and the butt of his rifle thundered on the olive-wood again.

THERE was a babel of voices inside, followed by sudden silence. Anazeh made a sign to Mahommed ben Hamza and me. We all three laid our shoulders against the door and shoved hard. Evidently that was not expected, for it swung back so suddenly that we were hard put to it to keep our feet. The man who had opened the door lay prone on the floor in

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front of us with his legs in the air, and Anazeh laughed at him—the bitterest sign of disrespect one Arab can pay to another.

"Since when does the word of a Damascene exclude an honorable sheikh from a *mejlis* in El-Kerak?" asked Anazeh, standing in the doorway.

He was in no hurry to enter. The dramatic old ruffian understood too well the value of the impression he made standing there. The room was crowded with about eighty men, seated on mats and cushions, with a piece of carpeted floor left unoccupied all down the centre—a high-walled room with beautifully vaulted ceiling, and a mullioned window from which most of the glass was gone. The walls were partly covered with Persian and other mats, but there was almost no furniture other than water-pipes and little inlaid tables on which to rest coffee-cups and matches. The air was thick with smoke already, and the draft from the broken windows wafted it about in streaky clouds.

Every face in the room was turned toward Anazeh. I kept as much as possible behind him, for you can't look dignified in that setting if all you have on is a stained golf suit, that you have slept in. It seemed all right to me to let the old sheikh have all the limelight.

But he knew better. Perhaps my erstwhile host ben Nazir had understood a little German after all. More likely he had divined Abdul Ali's purpose to make use of me. Certainly he had poured the proper poison in Anazeh's ear, and the old man understood my value to a nicety.

He took me by the arm and led me in, Mahommed ben Hamza following like a dog that was too busy wagging its tail to walk straight. You would have thought Anazeh and I were father and son by the way he leaned toward me and found a way for me among the crowded cushions.

He had no meek notions about choosing a low place. No doubt he was cynically sure that in that case nobody would invite him to "go up higher." There were several unoccupied cushions near the door, and there were half-a-dozen servants busy in a corner with coffee-pots and cakes. He prodded one of the servants and ordered him to take two cushions to a place he pointed out, up near the window close to Abdul Ali. There was no room there, for that was the seat of the mighty and you could not have dropped a handkerchief between the men who wanted to be nearest to the throne of influence.

But Anazeh cut that Gordian knot. He strode, stately and magnificent, up the middle of the carpet amid a mutter of imprecations. And when one more than ordinarily indignant sheikh demanded to know what he meant by it, he paused in front of him and laid his right hand on my shoulder. (There was a loaded rifle in his left.)

"Who offers indignity to a distinguished guest?" he demanded. The question was addressed to everybody in the room, and he took care they were all aware of it, for his stern eyes traveled from face to face. "My men, who escorted him, are outside the door. They can enter and escort him away, if there are none here who understand how to treat the stranger in our midst!"

There was goose-flesh all over me, and I did not even try to look unembarrassed. A man's wits, if he has any, work swiftly when he looks like being torn to pieces at a moment's notice; it seemed to me that the more embarrassed I appeared, the less likely they were to vent their wrath on me. And so it transpired. Possibly Anazeh, too, was counting on that, for he was a shrewd old fox.

There was a murmur of remonstrance with the sheikh who had dared give tongue to what they had all felt the moment before, and somebody told him sharply to mend his manners. Satisfied with that, Anazeh directed the servant to place the cushions on the edge of the carpet, in front of the front row of those who wished to appear important. That obliged the front rank to force the men behind them closer to the wall, so that room could be made for us without trespassing on the forbidden area. So I sat down in the front row, five cushions from Abdul Ali, and Anazeh squatted beside me with his rifle across his knees. Then Mahommed ben Hamza forced himself down between me and the man on my left, using his left elbow pretty generously and making the best of the edges of two cushions. As far as I could see there were not more than half-a-dozen other men in the room who had rifles with them, although all had daggers, and some were curved similtars with gold-inlaid hilts.

As soon as I could summon sufficient nerve to look about me and meet the brown,

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conjecturing eyes that did not seem to know whether to resent my presence or be simply curious, I caught the eye of Suliman bin Saoud in the front row opposite, ten or twelve cushions nearer the door than where I sat. He did not seem to notice me, for the absence of eyebrows made his face expressionless. When his eyes met mine there was no symptom of recognition, and if he felt as nervous as I did he certainly did not show it behind his mask of insolent indifference.

THERE was still a good deal of muttered abuse being directed at Anazeh, and the atmosphere was electric; it felt as if violence might break out any minute. Abdul Ali seemed as much aware of it as any one and rocked himself gently on his cushion as if churning the milk of desire into the butter of wise words. Suddenly he turned to the sheikh on his left, a handsome man of middle age, who wore a simitar tucked into a gold-embroidered sash, and whispered to him.

"That is Ali Shah al Khassib, the most powerful sheikh in these parts. A great prince. A man with many followers," said ben Hamza in my ear.

Ali Shah al Khassib called for prayer to bring the *mejlis* to order. He was immensely dignified, and the few words he pronounced about asking God to bless the assembled notables with wisdom in order that they might reach a right decision would have been perfectly in place in the Capitol at Washington, or anywhere else where men foregather to decide on peace or war.

At once a *muballir** on his left laid a Koran on the carpet and began to read from it in a nasal singsong. There were various degrees of devoutness, and even of inattention shown by those who listened. Some knelt and prostrated themselves. Others, including Anazeh, sat bolt upright, closing their eyes dreamily at intervals. Over the way, Suliman bin Saoud was especially formally devout, for he had a serious part to play; his whole chance of success depended on being recognized as a fanatic of fanatics.

But there were three Christian sheikhs in the room, and one of them opposite me pulled out a Bible and laid it on the carpet as a sort of challenge to the Koran. It was not exactly a dangerous thing to do, because most Moslems respect the Bible as a book that contains many elements of truth; but it was a rather manly assertion of his own faith, if nothing else, and it provided me with opportunity.

Mahommed ben Hamza, dividing his time like a schoolboy in chapel between staring about him and attending by fits and starts, nudged me in the ribs and whispered.

"See that Christian! He would not dare do that, only on this occasion they like to think that Moslems and Christians are agreeing together."

The man who was reading to himself from the Bible looked up and caught my eye. He tapped the book with his finger and nodded, as much as to ask why I did not join him. At once I pulled my own from my pocket, and he smiled so gratefully as I laid it, opened at random, on the floor in front of me that I could have kicked myself. If the inside of intrigue feels good, the meanest feeling in the world is credit you are not entitled to. He thought I had done it to support his bold assertion of his faith. So thought the rest of them, and for the most part they were rather superciliously tolerant.

But as a matter of fact my eye was on Suliman bin Saoud. As the reading from the Koran came to an end amid a murmur of responses from all the sheikhs, the Ichwan sat upright and, in his sullen, indifferent way, stared leisurely along the line toward me.

As his eyes met mine I marked the place where the Bible was open with a pencil, and closed the book, suspecting that he might be glad to know where a pencil could be found in a contingency.

He did not smile, and the expression of his face barely changed. But just for a second I thought I saw a flicker of amused approval pass over the corners of his eyes and mouth.

So I left the book lying where it was with the pencil folded in it.

CHAPTER VIII

"He will say next that it was he who set the stars in the sky over El-Kerak, and makes the moon rise!"

ALI SHAH AL KHASSIB was the first to speak, and he was heard to the end respectfully, none interrupting, although it was obvious from their faces that not a few sheikhs were disposed to question both his

*A Moslem priest who recites prayers.

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leadership and most of what he had to say. Mahommed ben Hamza kept up a running whisper of interpretation, breathing into my ear until it was wet with condensed breath. I had to use a handkerchief repeatedly.

Ali Shah made no definite proposal. He said that a man whom they all knew well had brought news to the effect that Emir Feisul was ready to make war on the French in order to drive them out of Syria; that in a case like that of Moslems against *kafirs*,* there could be no question on which side their hearts or their interests lay; that several dependable men had brought word of great unrest in Palestine; and that in all likelihood the British would send their army to help the French, in which case the Arabs of Palestine were likely to rise in rebellion in its rear. That was the situation. They were invited to consider it, and to decide what action, if any, seemed called for.

He sat down without having risked his leadership by any statement of his own attitude, and there followed a perfect babel of argument, during which the servants passed the coffee and cakes around. After that, during every interval between speeches there was more coffee and more cakes—wonderful cakes made with honey and almonds, immensely filling; but the more full an Arab gets of stodgy food the more his tongue wags.

For ten minutes men were shouting their opinions to one another to and fro across the room. From what I could make of it there was not a man who did not advocate putting the whole of Palestine to the sword forthwith. But it was noticeable that when their turns came to stand up and address the *mejlis* their advocacy was considerably toned down. Everybody seemed to want somebody else to father the proposal for a raid, although every man was anxious to take part in one.

Old Anazeh on my right sat in grim silence, quizzing each talker in turn with puckered eyes. The only comment he made was a sort of internal rumbling, suggestive of the preliminary notice of an earthquake.

At the end of ten minutes Sheikh Ali Shah al Khassib brought proceedings a step forward by calling for confirmation of the news of unrest in Palestine. Man after man got up, and, since he was speaking of others, not of himself, painted the discontent of the Palestinians in lurid terms. Each tried to outvie the other. The first man said they were anxious regarding the Zionists and keen for a solution of the problem. The second said they hated the Zionists, and could see no way out of their predicament but by rebellion. The third said that no Arab in Palestine could eat for thinking of the Zionist outrage, and that the heart of every man in El-Kerak should bleed for his distressed brethren.

To judge by what the fourth and fifth and sixth said, Palestine was in a state of scarcely suppressed rebellion, and every living Arab in the country was sharpening his sword in secret for the butchering of Zionists at the first opportunity. The seventh man said that the Palestine Arabs had never under Turkish rule suffered and groaned as they did under the British, and that their cry was going up to Heaven for relief from the ingominious tyranny of Zionist pretensions.

Ali Shah al Khassib chose that ringing appeal as the cue for his next move in the game. He called on Sheikh Abdul Ali, "as well known in Damascus as in this place," to address the *mejlis*.

There was instant silence. Even the coffee cups ceased rattling. Abdul Ali got to his feet with the manner of a man long used to swaying assemblies. He had just the right air of authority; exactly the right suggestion of deference; the quiet smile of the man with secrets up his sleeve; and he paused just long enough before speaking to whet curiosity and fix attention.

He did not speak floridly or fast, and he indulged in none of those flights of oratory that most Arabs love. There was ample time between his sentences for Mahommed ben Hamza to translate into my wet and itching ear. But every sentence of his speech had measured weight in it, and every word he used was chosen for its poison or its sting.

He began by reminding them of the war and Emir Feisul's share in it; of how they, and their fathers, and their sons had fought behind Feisul and helped establish him in Damascus. Then he spoke of the British promise that the Arabs should have a kingdom of their own, with Damascus for its capital and borders to include all the peoples of Arab blood in the Near East. He paused for a full minute after that. Then:

"But the French are in Syria, and have

*Unbelievers.

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gathered an army that threatens Emir Feisul. The British are in Palestine, and gather a horde of Jews to displace the Arabs. The British are also in Mesopotamia. Feisul makes ready to attack the French, but the British will go to their assistance. Can anybody tell me how much of that promise to us Arabs has been kept?"

SO FAR he was on thoroughly safe ground. A man who preached against the French could hardly be suspected of being hired by the French to do it. There was nobody there but he who could say what Feisul's intentions were. You can say what you like against the English anywhere at any time; no doubt that is what they are for. And it needed no wizardry to prove that the Allies had broken every promise they ever made to the Arabs.

"Are you going to sit idle, and let Emir Feisul and the Syrians fight the French alone?" he asked, and paused again.

There was a good deal of murmuring—not quite all of it, I thought, entirely in his favor.

"What is the alternative? If you raid Palestine, the local Arabs will all rise to your assistance. The throat of every Zionist from the Lebanon to Beersheba will be cut. There will be plunder beyond reckoning. And you will help Feisul by holding back the British army from marching to the assistance of the French. The question is, are you men?—are you Arabs?—are you true Moslems?—or do you like to look down from these heights of El-Kerak over the home of your ancestors in the hands of so-called Zionists who are nothing but Jews under a new name?"

He sat down before any one could answer him, and whispered to Ali Shah al Khassib, who called on another man to speak at once. It was a pretty obvious piece of preconcerted strategy, but he got by with it for the moment; for the general feeling was on the whole in favor of a raid, and nobody minded much how the decision was arrived at so long as the responsibility was passed to some one else.

The man now called on was a smooth-tongued, tall, lean individual with shifty eyes, and a flow of talk of the coffee-shop variety. At the end of his first sentence any fool would have known that he had been put up to quiz Abdul Ali, in order that Abdul Ali might have an excuse to justify himself. He attacked him very mildly, with much careful hedging and apologetic gesture, on the ground that possibly the Damascene was ignoring their interests while urging them to take action that would suit his own.

And even with that mild criticism he set loose quite a murmur of minority agreement. For the first time since the speech-making began Anazeh barked approval, and I thought for a moment the old man was going to get to his feet. But Abdul Ali was up again first, and launched on the seas of self-esteem.

If I had not listened to equally childish political maneuvers at home in the States, and seen them succeed for the reason that people who want something want also to be fooled into getting it by specious arguments, it would have seemed incredible that a man, who had recently boasted of statesmanship, should dare make such a public ass of himself. Yet, for fifteen minutes he carried the whole meeting with him, and the warmth of his self-satisfied emotion made him ooze resplendent sweat.

"Now he speaks of you, *effendi*," Mahommed ben Hamza whispered; and in confirmation of it Anazeh clutched my arm, as if to keep the tide of eloquence from washing me away.

"Had the British done anything for the country this side of Jordan? Anything for the people's education, for instance? No! Instead, they had called in all the missionaries. Better than nothing were those missionaries. They had their faults. They undermined religion. But they taught. And the British had called them in, giving some ridiculous excuse about danger. It had remained then for him—Abdul Ali of Damascus and of El-Kerak—the same individual who was now urging them to strike for their own advantage—to take the first step for the establishment in El-Kerak of a school that should be independent of the British. He, Abdul Ali, greatly daring because he had the interest of El-Kerak at heart, had introduced that day into the *mejlis* a distinguished guest from the United States, whose sole desire—whose only object in life—whose altruistic and divine ambition was to establish an American secular school in El-Kerak!"

He sat down, glowing with super-virtue. And then the fur flew. Anazeh was first on his feet.

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"Princes!" he shouted. "That Damascene is a father of lies! It was I, Anazeh, who brought this man hither! That corrupter of honesty, who doles out other people's gold for hidden purposes, seeks to appear as your benefactor!" (It was fairly obvious that Anazeh had not received any of the gold.) "He will say next that it was he who set the stars in the sky over El-Kerak, and makes the moon rise! He is a foreigner, a father of snakes, and a born liar!"

Anazeh refused to sit down again, but stood with rifle on his arm, daring any one to challenge his statements. Abdul Ali flushed angrily, but laughed aloud. The next man on his feet was ben Nazir, my erstwhile host, who had repudiated me. And he repudiated me all over again, accusing me of abusing his hospitality by going over to Abdul Ali, who had never even heard of me before I came to El-Kerak.

There was no making head or tail of the storm of abuse and counter-abuse that followed, except that it did not look healthy for me. There seemed to be four or five different factions, all of whom regarded me as the bone of contention. Rather than betray anxiety I opened the Bible and began to make dots under letters, spelling out a message to Grim to the effect that I had no notion where to find lodging for the night, and that if Anazeh elected to carry me off I should have to go with him.

I did not know how to get the message to him without arousing suspicion and making matters worse than they were, and it seemed best not to call attention to the fact that I was writing. So I made a few dots at a time, and looked about me. I saw Abdul Ali, laughing cynically, make a gesture with his arm as if he consigned me to the dogs. Then I caught Grim's eye—Suliman bin Saoud's. He, too, was making capital of my predicament.

HE HAD got the attention of the men around him, and was pointing at the Bible while he reeled off a string of angry rhetoric that sounded like a cat-fight. He shouted at me, and made angry gestures; but I knew that if he wanted me to understand his signals he would never make them openly, so I ignored them.

"The sheikh from Arabia demands to see the book," said Mahommed ben Hamza in my ear.

I passed it over the carpet, with the pencil folded in it at the page I had begun to mark; and the men opposite handed it along, with remarks they considered appropriate. Suliman bin Saoud seized the book angrily, glared at it, denounced it, and wrote something on the fly-leaf. He showed it to the men beside him, and they laughed, nodding approval. He wrote again, and they approved again. He turned and talked to them; then, as if he had an afterthought, wrote a third time; when they wanted to look at that he ran the pencil through it and wrote something else on the other side of the fly-leaf, at which they all laughed uproariously. Presently he tossed the book back to me with all the outward signs of contempt that a fanatic can show for another religion.

I have kept that Bible as a souvenir, with the verses from the Koran written on the fly-leaf in Arabic in Grim's fine hand. Underneath them, in Greek characters with a pencil line scrawled through them, is the only sentence that interested me at the moment:

"This looks good. Keep Anazeh quiet and sober."

Anazeh was beginning to hold forth again, shaking his fist at Abdul Ali and making the roof echo to his mighty bellowing. I tugged at the skirt of his cloak, and after a minute he sat down to discover what I wanted. He seemed to realize that I needed some sort of reassurance, and he began to flood me with promises of protection. It was about a minute before I could get a word in edgeway. Then:

"Jimgrim says," said I.

"Jimgrim! Is he here?"

"He surely is."

"How do you know?"

"We have a sign. Jimgrim says, Be quiet, and drink no strong drink."

He leaned across to Mahommed ben Hamza, doubting his ears and my Arabic. I repeated the message, and ben Hamza translated.

"I don't believe Jimgrim is here!" said Anazeh. "I would know him among a million."

"It is true," said ben Hamza, grinning from ear to ear, "for I myself know where he sits!"

"Where then?" Anazeh demanded excitedly.

"Don't you dare!" said I, and ben Hamza grinned again.

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"He is my friend. I say nothing," he answered.

Anazeh put in the next five minutes minutely examining every face within range, while the din of argument rose louder and more violent than ever, and suspicion of me seemed to be gaining.

But suddenly Suliman bin Saoud got to his feet and there was silence. They were all willing to listen to a member of the Ichwan sect, for the news of its power and political designs had spread wherever men talk Arabic. He spoke gutturally in a dialect that ben Hamza did not find it any too easy to follow, so I only got the general gist of his remarks.

He said that he had much experience of raids and of making preparations for them. A raid aimed at the Zionists—at this moment—might be good—perhaps. They were better judges of that than he. But it was all-important to know who was in favor of the raid, and exactly why. The words men spoke were not nearly so impressive as the deeds they did. Therefore, when the illustrious Skeikh Abdul Ali of Damascus urged a raid on the one hand, and boasted of provision for a school in El-Kerak on the other, it would be well to examine this foreign *effendi*, whom Abdul Ali claimed to have introduced. The claim was disputed, but the claim was not made for nothing. In his judgment, based on vast experience of politics in Arabia, motives were seldom on the surface. All depended on the motives of the illustrious Abdul Ali. This stranger from America—he glared balefully at me—should be investigated thoroughly. As a man of vast experience with the interests of El-Islam at heart, he offered respectfully to examine this stranger thoroughly with the aid of an interpreter. He confessed to certain suspicions; should they prove unfounded, then it might be reasonable to credit the rest of Abdul Ali's statements; if not, no. He was willing, if the honorable *mejlis* saw fit, to take the stranger aside and put many questions to him."

WHEN he had finished you could feel the suspicion directed at me. It was like a cold wind. Anazeh was just as conscious of it, and muttered something about its being time to go. Abdul Ali got up and asked indignantly why the Ichwan from so far away should have such an important voice; he himself stood there ready to answer all questions. Suliman ben Saoud retorted that he proposed to question the Damascene afterwards.

"They shall not interfere with you! You are in my charge," Anazeh growled in my ear. "I will call my men at the first excuse."

"Jimgrim says, 'Be quiet!'" said I.

There was another uproar, in which Ali Shah al Khassib openly took the part of Abdul Ali, and a dozen men demanded to know how much he had been paid to do it. Finally, Suliman bin Saoud beckoned me, and with Mahommed ben Hamza at my heels I followed him to a narrow door in a side wall that opened on a stone stairway leading to the ramparts. Anazeh came too, growling like a hungry bear, and after a couple of blood-curdling threats hurled at Suliman bin Saoud's back he took up position in the open door, facing the crowd, and dared any one to try to follow. He seemed to have confidence in Mahommed ben Hamza's ability to protect me if necessary on the roof.

There was nobody on the ramparts. They were in the rather ruinous state to which the Turks reduce everything by sheer neglect, and in which Arabs, blaming the Turks, seem quite disposed to leave things. The Ichwan led the way to the southwest corner, peering about him to make sure no guards were in hiding, or asleep behind projecting buttresses. Overhead the kites were wheeling against a pure blue sky. The Dead Sea lay and smiled below us, with the gorgeous, treeless Judean Hills beyond. Through the broken window of the hall came the clamor of arguing men.

"O, Jimgrim!" grinned Mahommed ben Hamza when we reached the corner, and Grim turned and faced us with folded arms, leaning his back against the parapet. "You are a very prince of daredevils! One word from me—one little word, and they would fling you down into the moat for the vultures to feed on!"

"I remember a time," Grim answered, "when a word from me saved you from hanging."

"True, father of good fortune! But a man must laugh. I will hold my tongue in El-Kerak like a tomb that has not been rifled!"

"You'd better! You've got work to do. Where are your men?"

"All where I can find them."

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"Good. You'll get turned out of the *mejlis* presently. Look down into the moat now."

We all peered over. The lower ramp of the wall sloped steeply, but all the way up the sharp southwest corner the stones were broken out, and a goat, or a very active man might find foothold.

"Could you climb that?"

"Surely. Remember, Jimgrim, when I climbed the wall of El-Kudz to escape from the police!"

"Bring your men into the moat between dark and moonrise. Have a long rope with you—a good one. You and two men climb up here and hide. The remainder wait below. Oh, yes; and bring a wheat sack—a new, strong one. You may have to wait for several hours. When you see me, take your cue from me; but whatever happens, no murder! You understand? Nobody's to be killed."

Ben Hamza grinned and nodded. He seemed to be one of those good-natured rogues who ask nothing better than the sheer sport of lawless hero-worship. He would have made a perfect chief of staff for any brigand, provided the brigand took lots of chances.

"You'll be killed, if anybody finds you up here after dark! You realize that?"

"Trust me."

Grim nodded. He was good at trusting people, when he had to, and when the selection was his own.

"Affairs seem to be drifting nicely," he said, turning to me. "It's best not to let Anazeh know who I am just yet, if that can be helped. But if you must, when the time comes, you'll have to tell him. *Do* keep him sober. After the evening prayer there'll be a banquet; if he gets drunk we're done for. I'm going to make you out an awful leper, if you don't mind. They may yell for your hide and feathers before I've finished, but Anazeh will protect you. If he leaves the hall in a huff, don't make any bones about going with him. Let him ride out of town and wait for me about two miles down the track, at the point where that tomb stands above a narrow pass between two big rocks. Do you remember it?"

"What if he won't wait?"

"He must! Tell him I'll have a prisoner with me; then he'll be curious. But he'll wait. You can bet on that man when he's sober. But things may turn out so that it's simpler for you to stay and see this through with me. In that case you must persuade him to go without you, after explaining to him just where he's to wait."

"How shall I do that?" I said. "I haven't enough Arabic."

"I'll write it," he answered. "Give me that pencil."

"Say something, too, then about his keeping sober."

Grim nodded, and wrote quite a long letter in Arabic on a page of my note-book.

"The next move on the program." he said, as I pocketed the letter, "is for me to get Abdul Ali's goat: I think—and I hope—he'll try to bribe me. If he does, he's my meat! The whole question of raid or no raid hangs on their confidence in him. If I throw suspicion on him, and he disappears directly afterwards, they'll abandon the plan, confiscate his goods and chattels, and quarrel among themselves instead of raiding Palestine. Get me?"

"Um-n-yes. I've sat on a horse I was warned against—felt safer—and gone to hospital at that."

He laughed.

"No hospitals up here! It'll be soon over if they get wise to us. But I think we're all right; and you're almost certainly safe. But don't be tempted to talk. Well—we've been up here long enough for me to have put you through the third degree. Better look a bit uncomfortable as you go down, as if I'd got under your skin with some awkward questions. You, too, ben Hamza; don't grin; look afraid."

"I am not at all afraid, Jimgrim. But I will try."

"And don't forget: at the first suggestion that you're not wanted, make yourself scarce, and go and round up your men. If they put you out pretty roughly, keep your temper and run."

"*Taht il-amr!*" (Yours to command.)

"Come on, then. Let's go."

The sun was fairly low over the Judean Hills as we turned down the narrow stairs and found Anazeh waiting at the bottom.

CHAPTER IX

"Feet downwards, too afraid to yell!"——

ABDUL ALI was holding the floor again when we returned. He had abandoned the cold air of mysterious authority and secrets in reserve. His claim to backstairs

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influence having been challenged, he had resorted to the emotional appeal that is the simplest means of controlling any crowd of men anywhere. The demagog who can find a million men all responsive to the same emotion can swing them as easily as a hundred if he knows his business. Loot was the tune he harped, with the old Ishmael blood-lust for *obbligato*.

He had them by the heart-strings, and there were long-necked bottles of liquor that smelt of aniseed being passed from hand to hand. We returned to our places almost unnoticed, and within the minute some one handed a full bottle to Anazeh; the accompanying cup was big enough to hold any ordinary drunkard's breakfast, and the old sheikh's eyes admired the size of it.

I laid my hand on the wrist that held the bottle. He shook it off angrily, and began to pour. Grim, over the way, looked anxious. It was up to me to play this hand, so I led my ace of trumps.

Suddenly, and very clumsily, I rocked sideways to reach my hip-pocket, contriving to jog his elbow and spill what was already in the cup. He turned his head to curse savagely, and I showed him the folded sheet from my note-book. His name was on it in Arabic:

"Sheikh Anazeh ben Mahmoud, from Jimgrim."

He seized it, setting the bottle down between his feet, where it was instantly reached for by some one else and handed down the line. Reading was evidently not Anazeh's favorite amusement, but he knitted his brows over the letter and wrestled with it word by word, while Abdul Ali's fiery declamation made the vaulted roof resound. I could only make out snatches of the appeal to savagery—a word and a sentence here and there.

"Who are you, princes? Men with swords, or slaves who must obey?—Raid over the Jordan twenty thousand strong!—What are Jews? Shall Jews take the home of your ancestors? Who says so?—Let the Jews be buried in the land they come to steal!—You say the Jews are cleverer than you. Cut their heads off, then they cannot think!—"

"When did Jimgrim give you this?" Anazeh demanded, folding the letter and stowing it in his bosom.

"That is the message that I told you would come later if you waited."

"Do you know what is in the message?"

"No." That was perfectly true. I had talked with Grim, but had not read what he had written.

"He wishes me to go and wait for him at a certain place."

"Why not do it?"

"*Rubbama.*" (Perhaps.)

"True-believers! Followers of the Prophet! Sons of warrior kings!" thundered Abdul Ali. "Will you do nothing to help Feisul, a lineal descendant of the Prophet? You have helped him to a throne. Now strike to hold him there!"

"Jimgrim says, I may go away and leave you here," growled Anazeh. "What say you?"

"*Ala khatrak.* (Please yourself.) Jimgrim is wise."

"He is the father of wisdom. *Mashallah!* I will consider it. There will be a banquet presently!"

"And loot! You can help yourselves!" shouted Abdul Ali, and sat down amid a storm of applause.

Suliman bin Saoud was on his feet before the tumult died away, and again they grew perfectly still to listen to him. If an Arab loves anything under heaven more than his own style of fighting, it is the action and reaction of debate. I could not understand a word of the mid-Arabian dialect, but Abdul Ali's retorts were plain enough; and from the way Grim pointed at me and Mahommed ben Hamza it was fairly easy to follow what was happening.

He denounced me as possibly dangerous, and wondered why they permitted me to have an interpreter, who could whisper to me everything that was being said.

"Put out the interpreter!" sneered Abdul Ali, and there was a chorus of approval.

Mahommed ben Hamza got up and hurried for the door while the hurrying was good and painless to himself, though it was hardly that to other people; forcing his way between the close-packed notables he kicked more than one of them pretty badly and grinned when they cursed him. I saw Abdul Ali whisper to one of his old-rose parasites, who got up at once and made his way toward the door, too.

"The fellow is from Hebron," Abdul Ali sneered in a voice loud enough for all to hear. "It is best that he should not go back to Hebron to tell tales! I have attended to it."

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My blood ran cold, and I tried to catch Grim's eye, but he would not look my way, although he must have heard what the Damascene said. It seemed to me that if Mahommed ben Hamza were either murdered or imprisoned Grim's whole chance of success were gone, and the danger would be multiplied ten-fold. Anazeh appeared to be the only hope. The old-rose individual had not reached the door yet.

"HOW about your men?" I asked.

"They are all right."

"Why not go and see?"

"They are good men. I know them. If there is trouble they will come and tell me."

The door opened softly and the gorgeous parasite slipped through. I had a mental vision of Mahommed ben Hamza lying face-downward with his new coat stained with blood. There was nothing for it but the magic formula.

"Jimgrim says, see that ben Hamza gets away safely!"

"Dog of a Hebron tanner's son—let him die! What is that to me?"

"It is Jimgrim's request."

"*Wallahi haida fasl!* (By God this is a strange affair!) Wait here!"

There was nothing to excite comment in his getting up to leave the room. A dozen men had done that and come in again. He strode out, straight down the middle of the carpet. Suliman bin Saoud went on talking, and to judge by Abdul Ali's increasingly restless retorts he was getting that gentleman's goat as promised. Finally Abdul Ali got to his feet and said that if the Ichwan would see him alone he would show him certain documents that would satisfy him, but that it would not be policy to produce in public. He offered to send for the documents, and to show them during or after the banquet.

So Suliman bin Saoud sat down, and there was a good deal of quiet nudging and nodding. Every one seemed to understand that the Ichwan was going to be bribed; and they seemed to admire his ability to get for himself a share of the funds that most of them had tapped.

A man nearly opposite me leaned over and said in fairly good French, with the manner of a doctor assuring his patient that the worst is yet to come:

"It has been decided that you are to be detained here in the castle until there is no danger of your carrying away important news."

While I was turning that over in my mind Anazeh came back, grinning. Something outside had tickled him immensely, but he would not say anything. He sat down beside me and chuckled into his beard; and when his neighbor on the right asked what had amused him he turned the question with a bawdy joke.

"Did ben Hamza get away?" I whispered.

But he only nodded, and continued chuckling until the man on duty by the door announced to the "assembled lords and princes" that the muezzin summoned them to prayer. All except three Christian sheikhs trooped up the narrow stairway in Ali Shah al Khassib's wake, Anazeh going last with a half-serious joke about not caring to be stabbed in the back.

I expected the three non-Moslems would take advantage of the opportunity to ask me a string of questions. But they took exactly the opposite view of the situation and avoided me, withdrawing into a corner by themselves. I suppose they thought that to be seen talking to me was more risky than the amusement merited.

So I went up to the ramparts, too, to watch the folk at prayer, minded to keep out of sight, for they don't like being regarded as a curious spectacle; and on the way up I did something that may have had a lot to do with our getting away alive, although I did not give much thought to it and could hardly have explained my motive at the time.

The door opened inward, and was almost exactly the same width as the stairway, so that when it stood wide open you could not have put your hand between its edge and the farther wall. Lying on the floor of the hall within a few feet of the nearest corner was a wooden stick that somebody probably used to wallop a balky horse with. I picked it up, and discovered more by accident than intention that it was about an inch too long to fit the width of the stairway. If you bent it the least bit, it would go in and stay in place horizontally across the passage. I moved the door and placed the stick out of sight behind it.

I FOUND the view from the ramparts much more interesting than the soul-saving formalities of eighty or so potential cutthroats, and stood watching the shadows deepen in the Jordan

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Valley, as no doubt Joshua watched them from somewhere near that same spot before he marshaled his invading host. You could understand why people who had wandered forty years in a stark and howling wilderness should yearn for those colored, fertile acres between the Jordan and the sea; why they should be willing to fight for them, die for them, do anything rather than turn back.

By the time we had filed down—Anazeh last again—the servants had nearly finished spreading a banquet. What looked like bed-sheets had been laid along the strip of carpet, and the whole length of them was piled with all imaginable things to eat, from cakes and fruit to whole sheep roasted and seethed in camel's milk and honey. There were no less than six sheep placed at intervals along the "table," with mountains of rice, scow-loads of apricots cooked in various ways, and a good-sized flock of chickens spitted and smeared with peppery sauce. At a guess, I should say there were several pounds of meat, about two chickens, and a peck of rice per man, with apricots and raisins added; but they faced the prospect like heroes.

Perhaps what helped them face it was the sight of sundry bottles bearing labels more familiar in the West. Abdul Ali, licking his lips like a cat that smells canary, took his place on a cushion up near the window again on the right of Ali Shah al Khassib, who was only the nominal host. Abdul Ali left no doubt in anybody's mind as to who was paying for the feast, for it was he who gave orders to the servants in a bullying tone of voice and begged every one be seated.

Anazeh looked at the bottles of brandy—looked at me—and prayed under his breath; or, at any rate, it looked and sounded like a prayer. He may have been swearing. He and I were not very far from the door, for the seats near the head of the table were all taken. I sat down at once, so as not to be conspicuous, but Anazeh remained standing so long that at last Abdul Ali called to him to sit down and eat his fill, using the offensively magnanimous tone of voice that some men can achieve without an effort. I think Anazeh had been waiting for just that opening.

"I have twenty men outside," he announced. "Shall I eat, and not they?" The old man had not denied himself amusement as well as liquor.

"This is a feast for notables," said Abdul Ali.

"A little bread with my own men is better than meat and drink at a traitor's table," Anazeh answered. "*Wallahi!* (By God!) I go to eat with honest men!" He laid a hand on my head. "Ye have said this *effendi* must stay in the castle. Well and good. Whoever harms him or offers him indignity shall answer to me and my men for it!" He bowed to me like a king taking leave of his court. "*Lailtak sa'idi. Allah yifazak, effendi!* (Good night. God keep you, *effendi!*) With that he stalked out, and the door slammed shut behind him. Everybody, including Abdul Ali, laughed.

The banquet was a boresome business—an interminable competition to see who could eat and drink the most. With my interpreter gone, and everybody else too busy guzzling to trouble to speak distinctly for my benefit, I had to depend on my eyes for information and naturally used them to the utmost. I noticed that Abdul Ali, Suliman bin Saoud and myself were the only men in the room, servants included, who ate and drank within the bounds of decency and reason. One of the servants, walking up and down the table-cloth with brandy and relays of vegetables, was drunk very early in the game and had to be thrown out.

Abdul Ali kept conversation going on the subject of the raid, and the more the brandy bottles circulated the easier he found it to keep enthusiasm burning. He talked about me, too, several times, and every time that subject cropped up all eyes turned in my direction. I think he was making the most of the school idea, mixing up the raid with education and serving the mixture hot, as it were, with brandy sauce.

But over the way, about half-way down the table, the Ichwan Suliman bin Saoud, dead-cold-sober and abstemious, as befitted a fanatic was talking too. And he was quite evidently talking against Abdul Ali, so that the Damascene kept looking at him with a troubled expression, alternately eyeing the door impatiently, as if he expected some one who could put an end to that unpleasantness.

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BUT it was a long time before the door opened and the second of his old-rose parasites came in. I had not noticed until then that the man was missing. He thrust a packet of some sort into Abdul Ali's hands, and then whispered. The Damascene's face darkened instantly, and he swore like a pirate. Then, obsessed by the impulse to vent his wrath on somebody he shouted to me in German all down the length of the table:

"Your cursed interpreter has nearly killed my secretary! He struck him in the mouth and knocked all his teeth out. What courteous servants you employ!"

"What was your secretary trying to do to him?" I asked, but he saw fit not to answer that, pouring some more brandy instead for Ali Shah al Khassib.

So that was what Anazeh had been laughing at! The old humorist had either seen the fracas, or had come on the injured old-rose messenger of death nursing a damaged face. I begun to have hopes for Mahommed ben Hamza's success that night, but though I watched Grim's face, and knew that he knew German, I could not detect a trace of interest. He kept on talking against Abdul Ali until after ten o'clock, when most of the notables were about as full as they could hold at last, and those who were not too drunk were ready for anything in or out of reason.

At that stage of the proceedings they ushered in the dancing girls. The servants cleared away most of the food, removed the table-cloths, and a ring was formed practically all around the room, the notables leaning their backs against the wall to ease overworked bellies. I set my cushion down next to a very drunken man just by the narrow door that opened on the stairway leading to the ramparts. He fell asleep with his head on my shoulder within five minutes, and as that, for some sub-subtle reason, seemed to make me even more unnoticeable I let him snore away in peace. Over in Abdul Ali's corner of the room there was a real council of war going on in whispers; opposite to him, ten paces or so distant from me, Suliman bin Saoud was holding a rival show, and it was an even bet which was making greatest headway. The more or less drunk, and all the younger sheikhs had eyes and ears for nothing but the dancing girls.

They were outrageous hussies. They wore more clothes than a Broadway chorus lady, and rather less paint, but if they were symbols of the Moslem paradise (as a learned Arab once assured me that they are meant to be) then, as I answered the Arab on that occasion, "me for hell." But none of those sheikhs had ever seen Broadway, so you could hardly blame them.

Abdul Ali seemed to have his arrangements with the men in his corner cinched at last to his satisfaction, and walked a little unsteadily across the room to make his peace with Suliman bin Saoud. He held brazenly in one hand a leather wallet that bulged with paper money—doubtless the "documents" that he had sent for—and nodded to me as he passed with more familiarity than he had any right to, since he had so ostentatiously dismissed me to the dogs. I suppose he felt so sure of "convincing" Suliman bin Saoud, and was so bent on offsetting the reverse caused by Anazeh, that he had been reviving that project about the school and therefore chose to appear on intimate terms with me. I met him more than half-way; any one who cared to might believe I loved him like a brother.

HE STOOD in front of Suliman bin Saoud, rocking just a trifle from the effects of alcohol and smoke, and there was about five minutes' conversation of which I failed to catch any of the words, but could understand the general drift. The men who had come under the Ichwan's influence kept joining in and raising objections, and I gathered that they expected a percentage of the bribe for which Suliman bin Saoud was supposed to be maneuvering.

But even Abdul Ali, with a pouch of paper money in his hand, was not quite so barefaced as to bribe the Ichwan publicly; there are what even he considered decencies to be observed. At the end of five minutes he suggested a private talk on the parapet. Suliman bin Saoud rose with apparent reluctance. Abdul Ali took his arm. It was Suliman bin Saoud who opened the narrow door, and Abdul Ali who went through first. I did not wait for any invitation, but let my snoring neighbor fall on his side, hurried through after them, and closed the door behind me. Groping for the stick in the dark, I jammed it between the door and the opposite wall; it was a good stout stick, and I had to use

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a lot of force to get it horizontal, so that it would stay in place if any one should try to open the door behind us. Then I followed them to the parapet.

The moon was about full and bathing the whole roof, and all the countryside in liquid light. There was a certain amount of mist lower down, and you could only make out the Dead Sea through it here and there; but up where we were, and even in the moat eighty feet below us, it was almost like daylight without the glare and heat. I leaned over, but could see nobody in the moat, and there was no sign of Mahommed ben Hamza.

Abdul Ali led the way toward the corner where Grim had given his orders to ben Hamza that afternoon. He did not seem to realize that I was following, and when he turned at last, with his back to the parapet and the moonlight full in his face, he demanded in German:

"*Was machen Sie hier?*"

I was about to answer him when there came a noise like subterranean thunder from the mouth of the stairway. I could not have spoken if I had tried. The terrific excitement of that minute changed to fear, and almost stopped my heart beating. Beyond any kind of doubt they were trying to force that door below and follow us. The first words I could force out were in English, for Grim's benefit.

"I stuck a stick in the door. God knows whether it will stay put!"

That gave the whole game away at once.

"So!" said Abdul Ali, thrusting the wallet into his bosom and pulling out a pistol with the other hand. "So!"

Grim said never a word, but closed with him, and in a second we were all three struggling like madmen. The pistol was an automatic, and not cocked; I managed to get hold of Abdul Ali's wrist and wrench the weapon away before he could pull back the slide, and then we all three went down together on the stone roof, Abdul Ali yelling like a maniac, and Grim trying to squeeze the wind out of him. Even then, sometimes down under the two of them as we rolled and fought, I could still hear the thundering on the door. No doubt the noise they made prevented them from hearing Abdul Ali's yells for help.

The man's strength was prodigious, although he was puffy and short-winded. It began to look as if we would have to knock him on the head to get control of him. But even so, there was no rope—no sign of Mahommed ben Hamza and his men. You can think of a lot of things while you fight for your life eighty miles away from help, and I wondered whether Grim would throw him over the parapet, and whether we two would have to take our chance of mountaineering down that ragged corner of the wall.

But suddenly about a hundred and eighty pounds of human brawn landed feet-first on my back. A voice said "*Taib*,* Jimgrim!" and two other men jumped after him from somewhere on the ruined wall above us. In another second Abdul Ali was held hand and foot, tied until he could not move, and then a wheat-sack was pulled down over his head and made fast between his legs.

"You're late!" said Grim. "Quick! Where's the rope? Are your men below?"

The thundering on the door had ceased. Either they were coming up the steps already, or had gone to reach the parapet by some other way. It did not occur to me, or for that matter to any of us in the excitement of the minute, that they might be holding a consultation below, or might even have abandoned the idea of following, although I think now that must be the explanation, for what we did took more time than it takes to set it down.

Ben Hamza made one end of the rope fast around Abdul Ali's feet. He would not listen to argument. He said he knew his business, and certainly the knot was workmanlike. Then he called over the parapet (an Arab never whistles) and a voice answered from the southern side of the moat, where some fallen stones cast a shadow. Then the three of them lifted Abdul Ali over, and lowered him head-first.

It was a slow business, for otherwise he would have been stunned against the first projection. I thought that Grim looked almost as nervous as I felt, but Mahommed ben Hamza was having the time of his life, and could not keep his tongue still.

"Head upwards a man can yell," he explained to me, grinning from ear to ear. "Feet upwards, too afraid to yell!"

Then the thundering on the door began again, louder than before it seemed to me. But after what seemed like a long-drawn hour we saw shadowy arms below reach

*All right.

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up and seize the prisoner, and the loose rope came up again hand over hand.

"You next!" said Grim quietly, pushing me forward, and carefully examining the loop Mahommed ben Hamza was making in the rope-end.

CHAPTER X

"Money doesn't weigh much!"

WELL—you don't stand on precedence or ceremony at times like that. Over I went in the bight of the rope, and they let me fall about fifteen feet before they seemed to realize that I had let go of the parapet; added on to all that had gone before that made about the climax of sensation. The pain of barking the skin of my knees and elbows off against projecting angles of stone was a relief.

I'm not going to pose as a man of iron and pretend that any moment of that probably safe enough descent was less than hell. Henceforth, any man who can suffer himself to be dangled by moonlight in the cutting noose of a half-inch rope over an eighty-foot drop, and not be afraid, is a hero in my eyes, and I will forgive him all his shortcomings. All that kept me from crying out several times was the knowledge that Abdul Ali had had to do the trip feet-upward with his head in a bag. When they let go too fast it was rather like the half-way stage of taking chloroform; when they slowed up, there was the agonizing dread of pursuit; and through it all there burned the torturing suggestion that the rope might break.

Mother Earth felt good that night, when strong hands reached up and lifted me out of the noose that failed of reaching the bottom by about a man's height. Come to think of it, it wasn't mother earth at that, but the stinking carcass of a camel only half autopsied by the vultures that my feet first rested on—brother, perhaps, to the beast I had put out of his agony that afternoon.

The others came down the rope hand-over-hand, Grim last. I suppose he stayed up there with his pistol, ready for contingencies. He had his nerve with him, for he had fastened the upper end of the rope to a piece of broken stone laid across a gap the crusaders made in the ramparts for the Christian purpose of pouring boiling oil and water on their foes. It did not take more than a minute's violent shaking after he got down to bring the rope tumbling on our heads.

Then the next thing he did was to take a look at the prisoner. Finding him not much the worse for wear, barring some bruises and a missing inch or two of skin, he ordered the bag pulled over his head again and gave the order for retreat. Mahommed ben Hamza went ahead, and the others picked up Abdul Ali as the construction gangs handle baulks of timber—horizontal—face-downward. When he wriggled they cuffed him into good behavior.

You have to get down into an Arab moat before you can realize what the Hebrews meant by their word Gehenna. The smell of rotting carrion was only part of it. One stumbled over things that should not be, in any world meant to live in. Heaps that looked solid in the moonlight yielded to the tread, and whatever liquid lay there was the product of corruption.

Yet we did not dare climb out of the moat until we reached the shadows at the northern angle, for though the moonlight shone almost straight down on us it was a great deal brighter up above, so there was nothing for it but to pick our way in the comparative gloom of that vulture's paradise, praying we might find a stream to wade in presently.

Once, looking up behind me, I thought I saw men's heads peering over the parapet, but that may have been imagination. Grim vowed he did not see them, although I suspected him of saying that to avoid a panic. He shepherded us along, speaking in a perfectly normal voice whenever he had to, as if there were no such thing as hurry in the world; and when we reached the end of the moat it was he who climbed out first to con the situation. A look-out in a bastion on the ruined town wall promptly fired at him.

I expected him to fire back, and climbed up beside him to lend a hand with the pistol I had filched from Abdul Ali; but he shouted out something about taking away for burial the corpse of a man who had died of small-pox, and the man on the wall cried out to him to beware lest he, too, get that dreaded plague.

"*Inshallah!*" Grim answered, and called to the men below.

They passed up Abdul Ali, dragging him feet-first again with one man keeping a

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clenched fist ready to strike him in the mouth in case he should forget that corpses don't cry out. And he looked like a corpse half-cold as they carried him jerkily along a track that roughly followed the line of the wall. I don't suppose that anything ever looked more like an Arab funeral procession than we did; the absence of noisy mourners and the hour of night were accounted for entirely by the dreaded disease Grim had invented for the occasion. My golf-suit was the only false note, but I kept on the side of the party farthest from the wall.

IT WAS a long time before we had the town wall at our backs, for, though a funeral in the circumstances might justifiably be rapid, we could hardly run and keep up the pretense. But at last we passed over the shoulder of a hill into shadow on the farther side, and there was no more need of play-acting.

"*Yalla bilagel!*" * Grim ordered then.

Twelve men running through the night can make a lot of noise, especially when they carry a heavy man between them. Hebron prides itself on training the artfullest thieves in Asia, who boast of stealing the bed from under a sleeper without waking him, but even the stealthiest animals go crashing away from danger, and, now that the worst of the danger lay behind, panic seized all of us more or less.

Mahommed ben Hamza refused to follow the regular track, for fear of ambush or a chance encounter in the dark, and Grim let him have his way. So they dragged the wretched Abdul Ali like a sack of corn by a winding detour, and wherever the narrow path turned sharply to avoid great rocks they skidded him until he yelled for mercy. Grim pulled off the sack at last, untied his arms and legs, and let him walk; but whenever he lagged they frog-marched him again.

At last we reached a brook where we all waded to get rid of the filth and smell from that infernal moat, and Abdul Ali seized that opportunity to play his last cards. Considering Mahommed ben Hamza's reputation, the obvious type of his nine ruffians, the darkness and rough handling, it said a lot for Grim's authority that Abdul Ali still had that wallet-full of money in his possession. Sitting on a stone in the moonlight, he pulled it out; and his nerve was a politician's, cynical and simple. Its simplicity took your breath away.

"How many men from Hebron?" he asked. "Ten. Well and good. I have here ten thousand piastres—one thousand for each of you, or divide it how you like. That is the price I will pay you to let me go. What can these other two do to you? Take the money and run. Leave me to settle with these others."

Mahommed ben Hamza, knee-deep in the brook, laughed aloud as he eyed the money and made a gesture so good-humored, so full of resignation and regret and broad philosophy that you could not help sympathize.

"Deal with those two first!" he grinned. "I would have taken your money long ago, but that I know Jimgrim!"

"Jimgrim!" said Abdul Ali. "Jimgrim? Are you Major James Grim? I have heard of you. A good thing I did not know that when I had you in my power in the castle!"

Grim laughed. "Are we all set? Let's go then."

We hurried all the faster now because our legs were wet, and the night air on those Moab heights is chilly at any season; and we knew a quarter of a mile before we reached the place appointed that Anazeh had not failed to keep his tryst. Away up above us, beside the tomb like a relic of ancient history risen from it for the night, Anazeh stood motionless and silent, conning the track we should come by—a grand old savage keeping faith against his neighbors for the sake of friendship.

He did not challenge when he heard us, but took aim, and held his aim until Grim called to him. When our goat track joined the main road he was there waiting for us, standing like a sentinel in the shadow of a fanged rock; and there, if Abdul Ali could have had his way, there would have been a fresh debate. He did not let ten seconds pass before he had offered Anazeh all the money he had with him to lend him a horse and let him go. But Anazeh waived the offer aside.

"You shall have as much more money as you wish!" the Damascene insisted. "Let me get to my house, and a messenger shall take the money to you. Or come and get it."

All the answer Anazeh gave him was a curt laugh—one bark like a fox's.

"Where are all the horses?" Grim demanded. I could only see five or six.

* Run like the devil.

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"I wait for them."

"Man, we can't wait!"

"Jimgrim!" said the old sheikh, with a glint of something between malice and amusement in his eyes, "I knew you in the *mejlis* when you watched me read that letter! One word from me and—" He made a click between his teeth suggestive of swift death. "I let you play your game; but I play mine. I have waited for you. Wait thou for me!"

"Why? What is it? What's the diversion?"

ANAZEH beckoned us and turned away. We followed him, Grim and I, across the road and up a steep track to the tomb on the overhanging rock, where he had stood when we first saw him. There he pointed toward El-Kerak, where a cherry-red fire was blazing in the middle of the town, throwing everything else into contrasting gloom.

"What is it?"

"That dog Abdul Ali's house."

"Who did it?"

"Fifteen of my men. The others would have looted it by morning."

"But how can your men escape? Isn't the gate shut?"

"The gate guards will go to help put the fire out. If not—" He clicked between his teeth again. If he felt nervous about the fate of his men he did not show it.

"They can't get away with plunder in a hurry," said Grim.

He seemed more puzzled than impatient —determined, I suppose to make the best of the situation, but unable to see the solution.

"Money doesn't weigh much," said Anazeh with considerable relish. "Here they come!"

There was no doubt somebody was coming. There came a burst of shooting and yelling from somewhere between us and El-Kerak, and a moment later the thunder of horses galloping full-pelt. Anazeh got down to the road with the agility of a youngster, ordered Abdul Ali, the shivering Ahmed and me under cover, and placed his remaining handful of men at points of vantage where they could cover the retreat of the fifteen. And it was well he did.

There were at least two score in hot pursuit, and though you could hardly tell which was which in that dim light, Anazeh's party opened fire on the pursuers and let the fifteen through. I did not get sight of Grim while that excitement lasted, but he had two automatics, for he took the one I had from Abdul Ali, and I heard shots enough to have come from twenty men. He told me afterward that he had fired in the air.

"Noise is as good as knock-outs in the dark," he explained, while Anazeh's men boasted to one another of the straight shooting that it may be they really believed they had done. An Arab can believe anything—afterward.

At any rate, whether the noise accomplished it or not, the pursuers drew off, and we went forward, carrying a cash-box now, of which Abdul Ali was politely requested to produce the key. That was the first intimation he had that his house had been looted, and he threw the key away into the shadows in the first exhibition of real weakness he had shown that night.

Four more of Anazeh's men were wounded, all from behind, and two of them rather badly, making six in all who were unfit for further action; but we did not wait to bandage them, and they affected to make light of their injuries, saying they would go over to the British and get attended to in hospital. Abdul Ali was put on Ahmed's miserable mount, with his legs lashed under the horse's belly; and Ahmed, with Mohammed ben Hamza and his men were sent along in front, being unarmed, unmounted, and therefore useless. The Hebron contingent put up a prodigious bleat all night long about that cash-box, maintaining that they had a clear right to share in its contents; and Anazeh's men, when they had time to be, were suitably amused.

It was not a peaceful retreat by any means. Time and again before morning we were fired on from the rear, and our party deployed to right and left to answer—always boasting afterward of having killed at least a dozen men. But by the time the moon disappeared we had come too close to Anazeh's country to make pursuit particularly safe, and whoever they were who followed us hauled off. We reached the launch, secure in its cove between the rocks, a few minutes after dawn, and Anazeh ordered his six wounded men into it, with perfect assurance that the British doctors would take care of them and let them go unquestioned.

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When Grim had finished talking with Anazeh I went up to thank the old fellow for my escort, and he acknowledged the courtesy with a bow that would have graced the court of Solomon.

"Give the old bird a present, if you've got one," Grim whispered.

So I gave him my watch and chain, and he accepted them with the same calm dignity.

"Now he's your friend for life!" said Grim. "Let's go!"

It was a cheap enough price to pay for that two days' entertainment and the acquaintance of such a splendid old king of thieves. He watched us away until we were out of earshot, he and Grim exchanging the interminable Arab farewell formula of blessing and reply that have been in use unchanged for a thousand years.

Then Abdul Ali produced his wallet again. He was certainly a tireless corrupter.

"MAJOR GRIM," he said, "please take this money. Keep it for yourself, and let me go. Surely I have been punished enough! Besides, you can not—you dare not imprison me! I am a French subject. I have been seized outside the British sphere. I know you are a poor man—the pay of a British officer is a matter of common knowledge. Come now, you have done what you came to do. You have destroyed my influence in El-Kerak. Now benefit yourself, avoid an international complication, and show mercy on me! Take this money, and say that I gave you the slip in the dark!"

Grim smiled at him. He looked extremely comical without any eyebrows when he smiled, for the wrinkles went all the way up to the roots of his hair.

"You'll have to see the boss," was all he answered.

I fell asleep then, wedged uncomfortably between two men's legs, and wakened at intervals by the noisy pleading of Mahommed ben Hamza and his men for what they called their rights in the matter of Abdul Ali's wallet. They were still arguing the point when we ran on the beach near Jericho, where a patrol of Sikhs pounced on us and wanted to arrest Ahmed and Anazeh's wounded men. Grim had an awful time convincing them that he was a British officer, and in the end we only settled it by tramping about four miles to a guard-house, where a captain in uniform gave us breakfast and telephoned for a commissariat lorry.

It was late in the afternoon when we reached Jerusalem and got the wounded into hospital. By the time Grim had changed into uniform and put court-plaster where his eyebrows should have been, and he, Abdul Ali and I had driven in an official Ford up the Mount of Olives to OETA, the sun was not far over the skyline.

Grim had telephoned, so the Administrator was waiting for us, and we were all three shown straight into his private room, where he sat behind the desk exactly as we had left him the other morning. He looked as if he had not moved meanwhile; everything was exactly in its place—even the vase, covering the white spot on the varnish. Only the flowers were changed.

"Not hurt, I hope, Grim?"

"No, sir. Fortunately eyebrows grow again. Allow me to present Sheikh Abdul Ali of Damascus."

The Administrator bowed rather elaborately, perhaps to hide the twinkle in his eyes, and Abdul Ali opened on him with all bow guns.

"I protest! I am a French subject. I have been submitted to violence, outrage and indignity! I have been seized on foreign soil, and brought here by force against all international law! I shall claim exemplary damages! I demand apology and satisfaction!"

Kettle raised his eyebrows and looked straight at Grim without even cracking a smile. He may have been trying to look stern without succeeding.

"Is this true, Major Grim?"

"Afraid it is, sir."

"Scandalous! Perfectly scandalous! And were you a witness of all this?" he asked, looking at me as if I might well be the cause of it all.

I admitted having seen the greater part of it.

"And you didn't protest? What's the world coming to? I see you've lost a little skin yourself; I hope you've not been breaking bounds and fighting?"

"He is a most impertinent man!" said Abdul Ali, trying to take his cue, and glowering at me. "He posed as a person interested in a school for El-Kerak, and afterward helped capture me by a trick!"

The Administrator frowned. It seemed I

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was going to be made the scape-goat, *faute de mieux.* I did not care. I would not have taken a year of Kettle's pay for those two days and nights. When he spoke again I expected something drastic addressed to me, but I was wrong.

"A profound apology is due you, Sheikh Abdul Ali. Permit me to offer it, together with profound regret for any slight personal inconvenience to which you may have been subjected in course of this—ah—entirely unauthorized piece of—ah—brigandage. I notice you have been bruised, too. You shall have the best medical attention at our disposal."

"That is not enough!" sneered Abdul Ali, throwing quite an attitude.

"I KNOW it isn't. I was coming to that. An apology is also due the French—our friends the French. I shall put it in writing, and ask you to convey it to Beirut to the French High Commissioner, with my compliments. I would send you by train, but you might be—ah—delayed at Damascus in that case. There will be a boat going from Jaffa in two days' time, which will give you a chance to recover from the outrageous experience before we escort you to the coast. A first-class passage will be reserved for you by wire, and you will be put on board with every possible courtesy. You might ask the French High Commissioner to let me know if there is anything further he would like us to do about it. Now, I'll ring for a clerk to take you to the medical officer—under escort, so that you mayn't be subjected to further outrage or indignity. Good evening!"

"Anything more for me?" asked Grim, as soon as Abdul Ali had been led away.

"No, I think not, Grim. You deserve a rest. Come and see me in the morning."

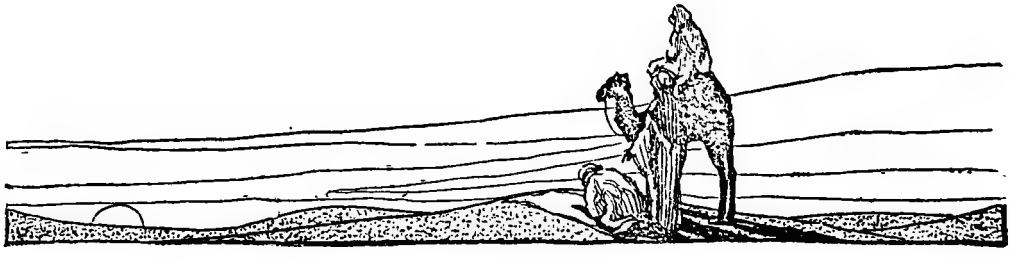
Grim saluted. The Administrator looked at me and smiled mischievously.

"Have a good time?" he asked. "Don't neglect those scratches. Good evening!"

No more. Not another word. He never did say another word to me about it, although I met him afterward a score of times. You couldn't help but admire and like him.

Grim led the way up the tower stairs again, and we took a last look at El-Kerak. Again, the moon was just beginning to rise above the rim of the Moab Hills, and the land across the Dead Sea was wrapped in utter silence. Over to the south-east you could make out one dot of yellow light, to prove that men lived and moved and had their being in that stillness. Otherwise, you couldn't believe it was real country. It looked like a vision of the home of dreams.

"Got anything to do tonight?" asked Grim. "Can you stay awake? I know where some Jews are going to play Beethoven in an upper room in the ancient city. Care to come?"



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A He-Man Platform

by

Robert J. Horton

Author of "Till the Wolves Come Home," "The Clew on Queen's Hill," etc.

"I'LL BE dog-goned if I'm going to keep on punching cows at forty-five dollars a month all my young life!"

"Buck" Wright gave typical Western emphasis to his exclamation by slamming his gray, wide-brimmed, high-crowned hat on the floor.

"I ain't gettin' nothing out of this business but bow legs an' sunburn, an' I'm gettin' along in years, too."

He gazed dismally out the bunk-house door to where the leaves of the stately cottonwoods along Willow Creek furnished a welcome contrast to the golden plains that stretched to the distant mountains.

"That's so, Buck," said Mort Griswold; "only just now, afore you spoke, I was remarking to myself under my breath that you was beginnin' to get gray."

"This ain't no joke!" Buck cried, running lean brown fingers through his thick shock of sandy hair; "an' if you fellers are content to consecrate yore lives—such as they be—to trivial things like ridin' herd an' brandin' an' fixing fences an' follerin' a chuck wagon around after cattle it's yore right. As for me—I'm a'goin' after something better!"

They were loafing in the bunk-house of the Circle D, making odd repairs to saddle leather, glad of the unusual opportunity to remain indoors—a novelty to these men of the open. Outside the warm sun of Montana's glorious Indian Summer shone from a far-flung, cloudless sky.

"Wal, now, I don't reckon you'll look down on us because we've got to keep lookin' after the trivial things, will you Buck?" drawled "Shorty" Watt, who was a Texan.

"Here, now, don't be takin' me wrong," Buck complained. "I ain't aiming to run down cowpunching none. I didn't mean that. I'll always be a cowpuncher at heart an' you know it. It's the wages; I'm almost sure it's the wages, for one thing. I know I couldn't get in with a finer bunch of men than you boys in any business. But I'm ambitious. Yes, that's shore it—I'm just plumb ambitious! An' I've got to get started, for I'm gettin' old."

As he rose and stretched, every inch of his lean, wiry, muscular body, his unblemished, tanned skin, his clean-cut features and clear gray eyes belied his statement.

"Let's see, yore about thirty now, ain't you Buck?" drawled Shorty with a wink at the others.

"It ain't a question of age. This range work is hard on a man an' I've got to get started making my pile. I've got a certain notion, I have—a certain, definite notion!"

Instantly the others in the bunk-house evinced interest.

"Notions is dangerous sometimes," observed Shorty, who thought a lot of Buck, as did every man on the Circle D.

"Well, this notion of mine might be dangerous, too—if I could put it in operation," Buck reflected. "Boys, I'll tell you

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what it is. I've got a notion I'd like to be a—a—a deputy sheriff!"

There was a moment of awed, amused silence.

"That throws me!" grinned Shorty. "You want to be a deputy sheriff! Well, you might make a good one at that—you gamble well."

This last was intended as vicious sarcasm.

"Gamblin' ain't a crime," Buck defended.

"No, it ain't a crime; but it's agin the law. An' you shore showed you could absorb hard licker after we shipped the beeves last Fall."

"That ain't a crime, either," cried Buck. "Oh, I know what yore gettin' at. An' let me tell you, Shorty, I ain't no angel an' don't claim to be; I'll gamble an' drink some, an' carouse around on occasion, an' unlimber my shootin' irons in a little celebration like the rest of you—an' stand off the law till we finish it. But you never heard tell of me rustlin' any cattle, eh? Or robbing any banks or trains or stealin' anything from anybody? An' you never heard of me cheatin' in any of those games you refer to, did you? Or trying to beat anybody to the draw just to earn a reputation as a killer? Or——"

"Hold on a minute," Shorty interrupted. "I was just kiddin' you. You ain't an angel, no, or if you are we all are. There's lots of things that's agin the law but it wouldn't be healthy to enforce 'em around these parts. But, Buck, a man's got to be a trailer, a kind of detective-like, to be a deputy sheriff. I'm 'fraid yore capturing that outlaw Lemp has put some queer notions in yore head; an' the reward you got has sort of made you stick up yore nose at ranch wages."

"Maybe it has. Didn't I tell you I had ambition? An' say, Shorty, do you mean to whisper that a man who was born an' reared on the range ain't a natural trailer? Ain't I learned enough in all these years to know how to go after a man if I was sent after him? What——"

"Maybe so, maybe so," said Shorty. "When was you figuring on startin' to be deputy sheriff?"

There was a good natured laugh at this.

"Go right to it an' laugh," scowled Buck, picking up his hat. "An' while the merriment is in progress I'm goin' on a little ride to the county seat an' have a talk with a gentleman who needs my assistance even if he don't know it—yet."

"The sheriff wouldn't make any change of deputies, Buck," Shorty protested.

"No, but the voters might make a change of sheriffs," said Buck Wright laconically as he slung his saddle over his shoulder by the horn and strode out of the bunk-house.

"I'll be —— if he don't mean it!" gasped Shorty as they trooped out after him.

Buck Wright did mean it. In half an hour he was spurring his fast pinto Freckles toward the distant town of Rangeland.

IN THE parlor of the Rocky Mountain Hotel in Rangeland Buck leaned forward in his chair and, turning his hat slowly in his fingers, lifted his brows and regarded Fred Burke speculatively.

"You say, Mister Burke, you ain't decided for certain yet on all yore deputies—'specially the one for the east end of the county?"

"No." Burke, portly and red, answered with the hearty gruffness of the cattleman. "And I'm not elected yet, as I've explained now about three times. It's a tight race."

"Shore it is," agreed Buck; "a handful of votes might turn the trick one way or t'other. An' neither Sheriff Jordon nor you is payin' any attention to the east end of the county—that is, not much attention."

"Well, there's a lot of territory in this county. I've been out there once and so has Jordon. I think we'll run about even out there in the east end and the votes in Rangeland and the three other good towns in this end will elect one or the other of us. That's why we're making the big fight here where the most votes are."

Buck shook his head slowly as he listened. Then he leaned farther forward in his chair.

"Now, Fred, supposing you was to get a good big majority out there in the east end," he argued; "don't you think it might put you over the hump if things was awful close here?"

Burke was thoughtful.

"It might," he conceded. "But I can't take a chance with only ten days till election to take another trip out there. I would just about make the east end of the county by election day."

"Well now, why not send somebody

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else," Buck suggested. "Send somebody who is well known out there and who would try his ——est to land you the big end of the vote. If he should turn the trick an' it should put you over you could reward him with a appointment as deputy, say."

"Might be a good enough ideer to take a chance on, but who would I send?"

Buck leaned back with a broad grin.

"That's what I was waitin' for you to ask, Mister Burke. You'll notice I always use the 'mister' when I think it'll do the most good. I can answer yore question without half tryin'—send me!"

Fred Burke, candidate for sheriff of Long Grass County on the Republican ticket, laughed heartily.

"Buck, you're not a politician."

"But I can ride a horse."

"You haven't had any experience in these campaigns."

"I can pull a gun an' shoot as fast as the next man."

"And you haven't had any experience in the enforcement of the law."

"Well, I've been good enough to prevent its enforcement on divers occasions when us boys was indulging in a little celebration, an' if I can stop its enforcement I can compel its enforcement—now, can't I?"

"But as I said first, Buck, you're no politician."

"All the better! That's a cow-country out there an' a wild one. Those boys out in the east end don't give a —— for yore politicians. What they want is to be showed something. Now here's my proposition, Burke, I'll go out there and get you a good majority of the votes. The race is tight, as you say, an' you need 'em. They'll all be votes you hadn't counted on and which you ain't *got* now. I know what I'm talking about because half the boys on the Circle D was figurin' on voting for Jordon. If I get you a good majority an' you get elected you name me a deputy for the east end of the county or any of the county or all the county, but you make me a deputy."

"You might make a good deputy at that," reflected Burke. "And I'll confess you're popular and a danged good cowhand. Might appeal to the voters out there to have a cowpuncher in the sheriff's office. But there's usually a certain amount of preliminary work before a man steps into a job in the sheriff's office; and I've my political affiliations to look after."

"Well, as I said when we first started talking, I ain't tryin' to make you go against yore judgment." Buck rose and put on his hat. "But I'm aiming to put the same proposition up to Sheriff Jordon an' I know he's always been a big respecter of votes."

"Wait a minute," said Burke. "Your proposition is that you hand over a *good* majority of the votes in all the east end?"

"In the hull territory east of Snake Creek—which ain't so far from Rangeland."

Burke studied for a time.

"What sort of talking points you going to use?"

"That'll depend on the audience,"grinned Buck.

Burke could not resist laughing good-naturedly.

"By ——, Buck, I'm going to take you up. I don't know how you're going about it, but go ahead; and if you get a good majority out there I'll appoint you a deputy. Let's shake on it!"

MUDDY BEND squatted on the flat surface of the plain like a lazy brown toad basking in the sun. The flutter of the sear leaves of the cottonwoods that fringed the creek gave the place its only semblance of movement. Yet, despite its docile appearance when viewed at a distance, there were various activities in progress in the little prairie town.

Buck Wright knew this as he loped easily along the dusty road from Rangeland. Freckles was in fine mettle and the cool sting in the Autumn air made the blood sing in the cowpuncher's veins.

Buck had a habit many range riders possess of occasionally talking to his horse, arguing some problem aloud in this way or speaking to convince himself of something about which he was in doubt. He had talked considerable to Freckles on the way from Rangeland, and now, as he swung into town, he summed up his thoughts in a last vociferous statement:

"Dog-gone if I know just how we're goin' to run this campaign, old horse; but we've hit the first town east of the county seat an' we're goin' to start in some way or other right here!"

He rode up the single street at a sharp

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trot and dismounted at the hitching-rail before the Paradise Saloon. With spurs jingling merrily he strode across the narrow platform before the place and entered.

Some of the activity which Buck knew the sleepy appearance of the town concealed was here in progress and the puncher was greeted by a shout of welcome from a variegated throng of cowpunchers, other ranch-hands and smooth-faced gamblers.

Cross Watkins, proprietor of the place, was behind the bar and joined in the general greeting with a grin of delighted anticipation. Buck had a way of putting a punch in any kind of a gathering and Watkins looked for some good-natured fun.

Buck disregarded the invitation to drink while he examined the campaign posters which littered the back bar on either side of the mirror.

Finally he leaned against the bar and as he poured out his salutatory drink he eyed Watkins in reproach.

"Cross, I'm surprized," he said, shaking his head mournfully.

"Why, what's the matter?" said Watkins quickly, glancing about the place with some concern.

"I'm actually and positively amazed," Buck announced.

"Well, for cripes sake tell me what's wrong," cried Watkins.

Buck shook his head again, slowly and sadly. By this time most of the men in the place were interested and they crowded up to the bar.

"I wouldn't have thought it of you, Cross," Buck continued. "If anybody had told me you'd do such a thing I'd have burnt a hole in him."

Watkins laid his wiping towel on the bar, leaned on his elbows in order to look Buck squarely in the face. "Now then, out with it. Are you locoed or kiddin' me or what? Come across!"

Buck pointed to the back bar.

"Do you know you ain't got a single card back there sayin' Fred Burke is a candidate for sheriff?"

"Oh, ——!" exclaimed Watkins, wiping his forehead. "You had me thinkin' something was wrong."

"Something is wrong, Cross. You ought to have one of Burke's cards back there, yes, more'n one—an' you know it."

"Like the devil I know it. Burke's a Republican an' I'm a Demmycrat. Why should I be advertising a candidate I wouldn't vote for myself?"

"Listen to me, Cross; ain't Fred Burke a fine, upstandin' citizen?"

"Sure. An' how about Jordon?"

"He's all right, Cross. I ain't sayin' anything against Jordon. But don't you think Fred Burke might make a good sheriff?"

"He might; probably would. But ain't Jordon making a good sheriff?"

"He's had two terms, Cross, an' two terms is enough for any sheriff in this county. Besides there's another reason why you ought to put up a Burke card an' give him a square deal."

"Well, I'll be game and ask what it is."

"Because yore a friend of mine—so's I thought, anyway. An' I'm 'lectioneering in my simple way for Burke because if I can hand him a majority in this end of the county an' he's elected he's goin' to name me a deputy sheriff."

Startled exclamations, laughter, a few jeers and much raillery followed this announcement.

Buck pounded on the bar for silence.

"Now look here," he said in a loud, earnest voice to Watkins. "Let's you an' I make a deal. I'm a startin' my campaign to help elect Burke right here. I don't know where it'll end but here it starts. I'll go you or anybody else here any kind of a contest that's legitimate. If I win you soap Fred Burke's name for sheriff on that mirror behind the bar. If I lose I'll be on my way to the next town hopin' for better luck. That's a regular cow-country proposition an' politics ain't everything in this section of the country!"

"That's all right, Buck," replied Watkins, "but a man can't get away from his friends an' Jordon's been a sort of friend of mine."

"How about me?" Buck retorted. "I've spent a tolerable piece of money here now an' then an' I've come to the front for you on occasion. I made you a straight out an' out proposition, Cross."

"I've got to think it over," Watkins evaded.

"Sure—take all afternoon, Cross. Meanwhile before I put up my horse an' feed up, I'm buying a round for the house in my candidate's name. You don't object to takin' this here Republican money, do you?"

After the laugh which followed Watkins

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announced that he would follow Buck's lead.

"But not in the name of my candidate," he explained. "This is on me. I want to be fair an' I'll think over your proposition——"

"Take all afternoon," Buck interrupted. "I'm goin' to eat an' then I think I'll take a little hand in a card game just to keep in practise."

"I didn't think sheriffs or people who wanted to be sheriffs or deputies was in the habit of gambling. It don't seem good form!"

It was "Shifty" Lowe who spoke. Silence followed his sally while he leaned against the far end of the bar regarding Buck with mean, sneering features.

"Meanin' yore in the game against me," said Buck coldly. "Well, listen to this, Shifty. I've got some peculiar ideas an' one of 'em is that I ain't soliciting the votes of you nor yore kind."

Shifty's face darkened with rage.

"You may need 'em," he said viciously and walked quickly out the rear door.

"Plays every game the way he gambles," Buck observed in a voice loud enough for the retreating gambler to hear, "mostly under the table."

But two hours later saw Buck sitting in a black-jack game in which Shifty Lowe was dealing. The men had not spoken since they had returned from the noon-day meal. The cold, expressionless face of the gambler gave no clue to his thoughts. It was as if he had forgotten Buck.

But Buck Wright knew Lowe hadn't forgotten him and never would. In the celebration in Muddy Bend the Fall before, following the shipping of the Circle D beeves, Lowe had been accused of cheating at cards by a Circle D puncher. The incident had made Lowe an enemy of every one connected with the Circle D and thus Buck was indirectly involved in the feud.

There was only one conspicious difference in Shifty's attitude toward the game this afternoon. He was drinking more than usual. To those who knew him well this showed the gambler's mind was not entirely upon the game. Also it interfered with his normal manner of play. He was careless. After several reprimands, two of them coming from Buck, he became quarrelsome.

"That was the last card you dealt then," drawled Buck when the gambler made another mistake. "Shuffle 'em over; you ain't too drunk to do that!"

Shifty laid the cards on the table and his eyes burned with malice as he sneered at Buck.

"You wasn't thinking anything was wrong, was you?" he leered.

"Maybe not—but you ain't as drunk as you act," Buck replied.

Shifty smiled evilly.

"It don't 'pear to me your place is in a gamblin' game since you're out to be a deputy with the law at your back."

Buck kicked back his chair and leaped to his feet. "You an' I are goin' to have a showdown, Lowe," he snapped. "Gamblin' may be against some law of the State, but cheating's against he man principles!"

Quick as a flash Shifty's hand darted down toward his gun and as quickly he dropped below the table in time to protect himself from a bullet; for Buck had beaten him in the draw.

The others in the game leaped away from the table as Buck darted back a few paces his weapon snapping at his hip into a true aim on the gambler who was kneeling with hands upraised, forcing a smile.

"No use in our goin' too far with this thing, Wright; it wouldn't help either of us," said Shifty as quickly as he could get the words out.

Buck looked at him contemptuously, shoved his gun back into its sheath.

"I just wanted you to know, Lowe, that if I'm runnin' for anything I'm runnin' on a he-man platform; an' there's things I'll wink at an' there's things I won't!"

The gambler rose to his feet with poor grace. Now that the vision of death had faded he gained courage.

"I don't claim to be very fast with my gun," he explained lamely; "an' I wouldn't have gone for it if I hadn't been drinking." Then as the glitter came back into his eyes his voice became stronger. "If you want to make a showin' do something none of the deputies has done yet."

He leaned forward.

"Go get Mansen!" he cried. "He's a match for you!"

Buck thought rapidly for a quarter of a minute while he scanned the tense faces about him. Shifty Lowe's derisive laugh grated in his ears.

Then the cowpuncher whirled to face Cross Watkins.

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"Soap Fred Burke's name for Sheriff on that mirror an' I'll go get Mansen," he said in a ringing voice. "If I don't get him the name'll come off an' I'll quit; but by—— I'll get him!"

For long seconds there was absolute silence while every man in the place stared at Buck and Shifty Lowe licked his lips in a frenzy of excitement.

"All right, the name goes up," announced Watkins softly, his eyes gleaming with admiration intermingled with doubt. "But I think you're wasting your time, Wright."

"It's mine to waste," said Buck grimly as most of the men about him broke into a cheer.

THE news that Buck Wright was going after Frank Mansen as the big play in his campaign to help elect Fred Burke and win a deputyship spread like wildfire to every nook and corner of the eastern end of the county.

It was a bold play and any man who could make good on it would merit appointment as a deputy regardless of party affiliations. If accomplished the deed would be certain to gain for Burke an overwhelming majority in the eastern part of the county, and would likely affect the vote in his favor in the towns in the western section. Lowe had known well the enormity of the task he had skilfully set for the man he hated.

Frank Mansen was an outlaw of more than average ability. In addition to being a gunman of extraordinary speed and absolutely fearless, he possessed brains. It was said he made friends at the point of his gun and held them by tact and coercion. It had even been rumored that he had taken a sly hand in politics; that deputies who had been sent to get him had returned empty-handed but with an understanding with the outlaw. Posses had pursued him in vain; for he always made for the wild country of the Badlands in the extreme eastern end of Long Grass County near the isolated and notoriously bad town of Mound. In this section he had many friends.

Mansen's misdeeds included at least one train robbery, several bank robberies, cattle-rustling, and a number of minor crimes all of which involved several killings. Of late his operations had not been extensive and his band of fearless, resourceful followers was reported as broken up. He was known to be in the country adjacent to Mound, and it had been assumed that he would be left alone so long as he did not again begin his nefarious depredations.

If Buck Wright could have been allowed to choose the one man he would rather not go after as a first job as a deputy sheriff he would have named Mansen unhesitatingly.

He suspected that Shifty Lowe had deliberately schemed trouble in Muddy Bend to send him on this chase. But in any event he had said he would get Mansen and now it was up to him to make good.

As the ambitious cowpuncher rode eastward under the cool stars of early night he was beset with misgivings. It helped not at all that he had been tricked into assuming this formidable task.

"I wonder now, Freckles, if we can get Mansen," he said aloud to the pinto. "He's chain lightning with his gun an'—by —— there's one way to get him if we can get to him."

He spurred the horse, increasing the sturdy little animal's pace to correspond with his racing thoughts. As he rode rapidly through the night he laid his plans. He knew word of his coming and his purpose would precede him to Mound. He felt that the natural conceit and arrogance of Mansen would compel the bandit to meet him. He suspected that Mansen would have to meet him to retain one of his most valuable possessions—his prestige.

How to arrange this meeting and how to take advantage of it would test all of Buck's ingenuity. He decided his first move when he reached the Circle D where he was to spend the balance of the night would be to arrange to send word himself to Mound by telephone that he was coming after the outlaw.

If Mansen refused to meet him it might after all react to Buck's advantage.

He put this plan in operation when he reached the ranch. Shorty Watt readily agreed to ride north that night to a little town where there was a connection with the telephone line running through to the eastern end of the county to telephone to Mound.

"And say, Shorty," said Buck, "I don't know for sure just how I'm goin' to get Mansen, but I reckon it's a cinch I've got to get him out of there quick after I *do* get

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him. They'll likely give us a chase. Suppose you could round up that fast black of yours an' maybe the old man will let you take his sorrel?

"They're fast an' if you can get up there day after tomorrow by two o'clock say, we'll have a chance to get Mansen away on the black so fast they never can see anything of us but our dust. Wait for me on the main road below town. Do you think you could do that, Shorty?"

"Oh I can ride a hoss," drawled Shorty, "an' lead another; an' I know the way to Mound. I don't know what in —— you want to be a deputy sheriff for, but if the hosses don't break their laigs an' I don't die of heart trouble, it's just possible I could get up there."

Buck grinned at his friend and Shorty grinned back. Then with a "so long" Shorty started on his errand north.

Next night when Buck camped far to eastward he knew Frank Mansen was aware he was wanted and that Buck was coming to try to get him. Also his plans were perfected save for certain minor details which could only be cleared up on the spot of the meeting.

In the early morning the cowpuncher cautiously approached the tumbled country about Mound. He made a long détour off the main trails to the north and approached the town from that direction to avoid an ambush. He was making every move with care. When he reached a dry creek bed and clumps of aspens a mile north of his destination he tied his horse among the trees, spilled some oats upon the ground, for his horse, and proceeded on foot, thus taking advantage of every bit of cover without making a noise. In this way he slipped into Mound at noon and reached the Universal Hotel before any one was aware of his arrival.

When he suddenly entered the hotel bar he wore two guns.

Buck's eyes roved over those assembled within the place; searched the groups at the bar and card tables and roulette wheel for a familiar face. Only one did he see and he smiled sardonically as he recognized Shifty Lowe's pallid, evil features even as the gambler ducked hastily behind the little group at the roulette wheel. Lowe evidently had ridden north from Muddy Bend to the railroad and by taking a train eastward to the nearest town north of Mound had beaten Buck to Mound carrying the news of Buck's mission.

Inwardly Buck smiled, for the gambler's presence indicated that Mansen was somewhere at hand. Lowe, of course, had come to gloat over Buck's downfall.

Although the attitude of the men in the place had not changed Buck instinctively sensed the tension in the air; he was known. Expectancy and excitement seemed to hover like a smoke cloud over the groups scattered about the room. The place was notorious for its lawlessness. Although there were scarcely a dozen buildings in Mound the Universal bar drew its patronage from a radius of two hundred miles, due to its reputation as a gambling resort. But if for no other reason it would be renowned through its association in the past with the Mansen gang.

Alert to every move and look Buck strode toward the group at the roulette wheel. Shifty Lowe, meeting his glance as was inevitable, feigned surprize.

Buck beckoned to him.

"Want to see you a minute, Shifty."

Wary and uncertain, the gambler approached, real concern shining in his eyes.

Buck nodded him over to the bar and called for drinks. While Lowe poured his liquor with a trembling hand Buck spoke to him in a low voice.

"You put me up against a tough proposition, Shifty. Is—is Mansen—here?"

Instantly the glint came into the gambler's eyes. He turned and regarded Buck keenly. The cowpuncher evaded his look by pouring out a big drink.

"I expect he's here," said Lowe. "You wanted him here didn't you?"

"Is he—actually—in town, Shifty?" Buck's voice seemed to carry a tremor.

"Of course he's here," blustered Lowe. "Thought you wanted him here."

"You know where he is?" asked Buck anxiously.

"Might be able to find him," confessed Lowe as he tossed off his drink.

"Well, say, Shifty, do me a favor, will you?" Buck's voice was pleading. "See him an' tell him to meet me here at two o'clock. Tell him—tell him—" the cowpuncher lowered his voice to a whisper "—tell him I want to make him a proposition!"

Lowe's eyes gleamed malignantly.

"So that's it," he sneered.

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"That's it. Two o'clock. Will you carry the message?"

"I'll see it gets to him." There was triumph and contempt in the gambler's voice.

"I don't think I better drink this," said Buck, putting down his glass. "Keep what I've told you under your hat. I'll be here at two."

Buck strode hurriedly out of the bar.

Shifty Lowe leaned against the bar, his face the complete embodiment of gloating satisfaction.

"Scared!" he said to himself. "Yellow! Wait till Frank hears this. Afraid to take his drink an' packing two guns. Wants to make a proposition. Frank'll go through him like water through a sieve!"

The gambler glided out the rear door.

IN a room facing the west on the second floor of the hotel Buck Wright sat tipped back in a straight chair with his feet propped on the window-sill. He rolled brown-paper cigarets with immaculate care and held a flaming match to each as he smoked with fingers which were as steady as the rocks which strewed the Badlands. Now and again he smiled and looked at the silver watch he carried in the bosom pocket of his soft shirt. His gaze remained fixed most of the time on the tumbled country in the west. In time he became impatient and his gaze switched more frequently from the landscape to the watch. At five minutes to two he gave a short sigh of relief, rose, buckled on his guns and went downstairs.

As Buck entered the bar a little group of men standing before it broke suddenly away—all except one.

Buck knew instantly from descriptions that he was facing Frank Mansen, the outlaw. He would have known it if he had never heard of the man's lean stature, swarthy complexion, ragged, hanging mustaches, and cruel, glittering black eyes.

The swift looks of the two principals in the drama clashed and held, and in the meeting of their steady gaze each knew the other to be a man without fear.

"I reckon yore willin' not to attempt to draw until you hear my proposition, Mansen," said Buck in a slow, low voice. "I'm tellin' you Mansen, you can't get me without my getting you!"

Whether or not Mansen actually believed this he remained silent and made no move with the tense right hand which hung above the black pistol butt on his right side. The thin smile which had first been on his lips disappeared and the steady, alert gleam of the narrowed eyes was an evidence of his respect for the cowpuncher's reputation as a fast man with a gun. Moreover Buck had two and perhaps the bandit decided that while he might get his opponent, his opponent had an excellent chance of getting him.

"I reckon you'll listen to reason," Buck concluded. "If we start a gunplay we're both goin' to get hurt. No sense in that. There's a price on yore head, Mansen, an' anybody can take you in. I don't favor you'd go along peaceful-like. I'll make you a proposition whereby we'll have a equal chance."

A slight pucker at the corners of Mansen's eyes showed that his curiosity was aroused.

"Shifty Lowe here?" called Buck, his eyes never wavering from Mansen's.

The gambler answered from across the room.

"Here's my proposition, Mansen," Buck continued. "We'll hold up our hands an' let two men take our guns off our right sides. Then Shifty, who is short an' can get out of the way quick, can take the gun off my left and step between us an' lay it on the bar; when he jumps back the first man to get the gun has any advantage he wants to take."

Something akin to amused satisfaction leaped into Mansen's gaze. Slowly he elevated his hands while Buck followed his example.

"Step up here, two of you men an' get our right-side guns. Try to get 'em out at the same time. Get ready, Shifty."

There was a movement among the men. Buck could hear the gambler stepping softly behind him.

"Put the guns on the bar behind us," instructed Buck.

Would Mansen go through with it? For a moment he seemed to hesitate as a spectator reached for the gun at his right. But for a fraction of a split second the bandit's glance shot from Buck's eyes past his shoulder. It was filled with significance. He kept his hands aloft while the gun was removed and placed on the bar behind him.

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A similar operation relieved Buck of his right-hand weapon and almost instantly his other gun was pulled from its holster as the spectators drew back.

Shifty Lowe darted around from behind Buck to the space between the two, there was a thump on the bar and a scraping sound as the gun Lowe had taken from Buck's left holster went sliding toward Mansen's darting hand. It reached it and came to aim on Buck's chest as the cowpuncher leaped upon the outlaw.

With the hard muzzle of the weapon pressed over his heart, Buck brought his right fist to Mansen's jaw with all the power he could put behind it. The bandit hurtled backward and slumped to the floor in a heap. Buck followed him and grasped Mansen's gun on the bar.

From behind came a shrill scream of rage and the cowpuncher swung about and ducked just in time to escape the bullet Shifty Lowe fired from his own gun. A blaze at Buck's right hip and the gambler crumpled to the floor.

"Back away!" roared Buck as he covered the men lining the side of the room.

They put up their hands. After all it wasn't their affair. And Mansen was not in jail yet, his friends reflected.

"Slope for that back door, Mansen, an' slope quick or I'll bore you full of holes if it's the last act of my life," cried Buck, swinging on the outlaw who was getting to his feet, dazed.

He pushed Mansen to the rear door, keeping the gun roving along the line of standing men.

When they were outside Buck pressed the outlaw into a run and they soon were in the shelter of the tree-growth on the north side of town. Buck compelled his prisoner to walk briskly up the dry creek-bed to where his horse was tethered. Mounting, he marched the outlaw south and then swung to the main road westward. As they gained the road Buck whistled. Soon Shorty Watt came loping up, leading a fine black.

"All right, Mansen, get on that black. Now light right out between us an' we'll see if yore friends can catch the three best horses on the Circle D."

With a look of baffled rage and chagrin over his shoulder Mansen complied and the trio started westward at a gallop.

SHERIFF-ELECT FRED BURKE and First Deputy-Appointee Buck Wright were sitting at opposite sides of a desk in Burke's real-estate office in Rangeland.

"Well, you sure are elected, Fred," Buck remarked, as if the result of the election had not been known for two days.

"And you've certainly won your appointment," said Burke heartily. "Wright, if it hadn't been for that big majority in the east half of the county, and the influence your feat had on this end, the ballots might have told a different story. Why, even Cross Watkins of Muddy Bend says he voted for me! But, listen, tell me again how you got Mansen."

"Oh, now here," protested Buck, I've told you about it twice."

"I know, but how did you come to figure it all out?"

Buck smiled reminiscently.

"Well, Fred, if I'm goin' to have to trace all my thoughts every time I get a criminal—if I get any—we ain't goin' to get along at all, at all. But this once——

"Well I couldn't see any sense in getting shot up or killed and I felt it would make a better showing if I didn't shoot up or kill Mansen. What I wanted to do was bring him in in good shape, like I did. So I figured there was two ways of doing it: either make Mansen believe he had an advantage when he really didn't, or get him with my hands. He's maybe a little faster'n I am with a gun, though I've never seen him work.

"I didn't know just how I was goin' to work it till I got out there an' saw Shifty Lowe there. An' I wasn't sure then. But I'd arranged for Shorty to follow me with two good horses as soon as he got through telephoning an' could catch 'em an' we figured he'd get there by two o'clock. So I set the date for the meetin' for two o'clock an' sat upstairs in a room an' figured out the play whereby Mansen was to think he had an advantage in Shifty's bein' in on the important end of the play. Shifty was Mansen's friend, of course. I baited Shifty by making him think I was scared. An' it all worked out like gravy for when Mansen saw Shifty give him the signal behind me, as I figured he would do, he fell for the play. Then I had the chance to stop a gunplay an' use my hands. Say, sheriff,

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you know usin' yore hands is a he man sort of way to ——"

"But look here, Wright," Burke interrupted, "I've been wondering an' wondering why, when Shifty shot the gun down to Mansen an' he had it stuck between your ribs he didn't bore a hole through you."

"Well," smiled Buck, "as you said at first, I'm inexperienced in this deputy sheriff business an' maybe I'm a little forgetful too. Anyway, I plumb forgot to load that gun Shifty took off my left side!"

Sheriff-Elect Fred Burke and Deputy-Appointee Buck Wright grinned at each other across the desk.

Sled Wheeler and the Nameless Order

A Three-Part Story

PART I.

by John I. Cochrane

Author of "The Swinging Mirrors," "Sled Wheeler and the Diamond Ranch," etc.

CHAPTER I

"PERCY F. H. BRENDON—— London."

The house-detective was reading aloud from the hotel register, leaning over the desk to chat with the front clerk of San Francisco's most expensive hostelry.

"My word! Will you listen at that? Bet you a ten-spot he's taking a bawth right now—don't you *knaow!* But look who's here!"

His finger stopped on its way up the page, and he read in a whisper—

"Dan Wheeler—U. S."

A quick look about the lobby, and the plainclothes man asked:

"Is that right? He left here three years back—was it Sled himself?"

"How should I know? Been here only two myself." But the languid potentate showed a stir of interest. "But he sure looked the part!"

"Green eyes? Made you sit up and feel queer?" The detective unconsciously attempted a weak imitation as he put the question.

"That's the man! Old chum of yours, of course?"—sarcasm.

"I know him—yes." The dick was serious. "*You'd* brag about it. He's all right. And the things that lad has done—Mm-*mm!* Up in his room is he?"

"E-ah. Run right up and fall on his neck. I'll ring up an ambulance. There he is now—getting out of the elevator. Bet you don't dare say howdy."

The clerk was looking at the trim figure stepping across the lobby.

"I'll just go you on that, mister!—No—wait until he's alone."

The detective settled back on his elbows to watch the meeting across the lobby, for another man was approaching Wheeler. As he got a look at the newcomer, the detective was again moved to admiration:

"For the love of my folks! Look what's

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loose now—and bracing right up to Sled Wheeler, big as life! Bet you another that's Percy F. H. Brendon, old chap—what?"

The guess was natural and correct. Brendon had just had time to freshen up since his arrival, and had now come down from his room to take a look about him. He was the best kind of a young Englishman of the best class—wholesomely handsome and manly—and he looked about his new surroundings with frank, open-eyed interest.

At the very stair-foot he found himself face to face with Wheeler—just out of the elevator—and their looks met squarely.

Even British reserve was not proof against the jolt of meeting the level gaze of Sled Wheeler. The force in that lean, keen face was a direct challenge to manhood. Brendon stopped, stared, then with his delightful smile and in his pleasing full-chest voice he asked—

"I—beg pardon—but is this Mr. Wheeler by any chance?"

An instant's narrowing of the long green eyes, then slightly hoarsely—

"My name is Dan Wheeler, yes."

"What jolly luck! I have a card to you from Mr. Drake of Chicago——"

While Brendon was feeling for his card-case he got another jolt. With a smooth, quick movement Wheeler's hand came out, and the crisp words:

"'S all right. Shake!" Then in a lower tone, "Don't flash the card here—and the fewer names the better."

Brendon stared, his hand caught in a velvet-steel grip, watching the magnetic face with the thin lips that scarcely moved, as Dan went on:

"That's right—look foolish! And *talk*—keep talking, only don't say anything." Meantime leading the way across the lobby.

"I—er—what? Oh, certainly! Aw—awfully glad to meet you and all that, don't you know!" Brendon promptly began to rattle: "Just in from Chicago this afternoon—beastly bore—and not a soul to speak to all the way, you know. People not here to meet me—makes one feel so dashed lonely, don't you know. But what is the—er——"

"All right, you can turn it off now."

Wheeler calmly checked the flow of rich tones as they reached a corner settee behind a palm, and went on:

"Sit down. Now about that card—anything on it?"

"No—or—nothing to mention."

Flushed and somewhat dazed by the dizzy speed of this man, the Englishman produced the card. On it was—

Brendon is one of us—the best is none too good for him.

Wheeler handed it back without comment, but his face altered instantly. From being a rather cruel and disconcertingly hard visage it became attractive in a coldly keen fashion as Dan asked—

"Have you seen Garth yet?"

"Not yet—chap at the desk said he was fencing at the club, and must not be disturbed, don't you know. Most extr'ord'n'ry chap—Garth, I mean—seems to run this town. Is he the—er—mayor?"

The Englishman found it most distracting to talk to this Wheeler, who watched the desk the greater part of the time but now and then turned on one with a look that shook one up, don't you know.

"Mayor! Better'n that—he's The Boss!"

Dan flashed his little half-smile on the Britisher. It was hardly more than a quirk of the grim lips that showed the edge of even white teeth, but it had a warming effect on the instant. Brendon responded gratefully:

"Mr. Drake said that. He gave me a letter of introduction which I was to show to another person first, by the way. And he told me a lot of things about you—made me awfully anxious to meet you. It is great luck—running across you this way——"

"Yes—very nice!" Dan interrupted dryly. "But why didn't Drake give you a letter to Senator Sands himself? He is the biggest man west of the Divide." And he turned his attention away from the desk to ask it.

"He—er—I should say, I don't exactly need it, y'know." Brendon flushed like a girl. "I am—er—came to visit Miss Lina, Drake's daughter and the niece of Senator and Mrs. Sands. They are all staying here for a few days, at the hotel."

His frank embarrassment was an open confession, and he was delightfully aware of it—proud of it.

"I met Miss Lina in Chicago, and she is—er—better than a letter of introduction to her uncle, don't you think?"

"*Is* she?"—with a quick look of understanding that was at the same time respectfully admiring. "I knew her four years ago—before——"

"Before she married Westcott? You know

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he died within the year? She is a wonderful girl—and she has told me things about you." Brendon was warmly enthusiastic. "Things I'd be mighty proud to have any girl——"

"You want to forget some of that!" Wheeler had turned a painful red to his hair. "And until I can see Garth and get set right, you had better lay off me! That's what I am looking for now—a chance to get——"

"But I say!" Brendon protested. "You mean I must not be seen with you? I can't do that, you know. I have a package for you, besides, from Mr. Drake—I was to put it in your hands myself, at once. I can't run away from you on account of this man Garth, you know!"

"You will if you have sense," said Dan grimly. "There's no use ramming your head against a wall just to prove it's solid wood. As things are now you have got to get a permit to live in this town—and get it from 'Ghost' Garth. You'd better stick around with Miss Lina or the Sands in the mean time. Where are they—the Senator and his wife?"

"Looking at their new house across the bay—expected back any minute now, so the chap at the desk said. I am waiting to see them—to tell the truth, I am stony-broke!" said the Englishman cheerfully. "I have invested all my pile in a mining property—all I could rake up and borrow back home—and I haven't enough to pay my board for a week."

"Who rolled you for your wad?—sold you the mine, I mean?" Dan asked quickly.

"I bought a half interest with Mr. Drake—he owns the other half. I knew nothing about mines, you see, so I put my money on his judgment," Brendon answered confidently. "He said it was a good one, for a long-chance shot."

"And you bet your last cent on his say-so?" with a keen look.

"I did—yes. Why? Did I make a mistake?" Brendon went slightly pale.

"You did not. You played in luck, and stand to win big money. Drake is a man you can tie to."

"I am jolly glad to hear that," Brendon said with a sigh of relief. "It means a lot to the people back home. But in the meantime, unless a miracle happens I shall be on the streets in a week, y'know."

"Don't worry!" Wheeler was peering across the office at the man leaning on the desk, and he now stood up briskly. "It has happened!"

"Beg pardon! I—er—did you say——?"

"Me! I am it! I like your nerve and the way you plunge on a friend—and miracles are the easiest things I do. If you want to take the risk and go with me, come and see how easy it is to get money."

The light in Dan's green eyes was dancing, and altogether he was most irresistible as he stood looking as if the world was his playground.

"That will be ripping—awfully kind of you." Brendon hesitated. "But if you are running into danger on my account——"

"Forget it! I am strapped myself—got to make a riffle tonight."

"I have enough for both, for tonight—until you can see Mr.——"

"Thanks!" Wheeler seemed unable to let a man finish a sentence. "I can see Garth just the same, but I have just seen a man I know and I have a call to make. Ever hear of Lu Yan?" moving toward the desk slowly.

"Yes indeed—the rich Chinese merchant—Drake told me about him. Are you going to Chinatown?"

"S-s-st! Not so loud! and don't look so —— intelligent! We are being watched." Dan stopped to face the Englishman and to get between him and the keen eyes at the desk. "Got an iron—a revolver in your room?"

"Yes. Shall I get it?"

"Easy! Not so fast—you'll spill something. Now look stupid—and listen. Go to your room—put on your gun, an old coat and a cap you can pull down. Then come down the side-stairs to the ladies' entrance on the side-street. Sneak out without being seen, turn to the right and keep going slowly until I pick you up. Got all that?"

"Yes—er—well?"

"Give me ten minutes before you start. I have got to do the same trick and maybe shake some fool shadow before I meet you. I see the night-dick goes on duty now at the desk, and this is my chance. Now let's see you do a heavy good-by act."

Most of this was Greek to the Englishman, but he understood that he was to go through the motions of saying good-by, so he took the hand Wheeler offered and pumped it as he said:

"Awfully glad to have met you, old chap

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—hope I shall see you again soon. (Pretty good—what?)"

"Good enough—so long. Look stupid!"

BRENDON went up the broad stairway, while Wheeler stretched his arms and yawned, before sauntering slowly into the brilliant barroom. There he found Brenner, the house-detective in day-time, who had just gone off duty. Brenner had his foot on the rail near the far end of the bar, and in his hand he held his evening glass of beer. Just as he tipped his glass to his lips he saw Wheeler's face beside his own, in the reflection of the bar-mirror. Suppressing a strangled cough he set down the glass steadily—stood frozen motionless until he heard the reassuring words:

"It's all right, Brenner. I am not after you—I don't carry small accounts over. But if you want to square up you can tell me—any orders from your boss—about me?"

Seen in the mirror Wheeler's lips did not move, and in like manner the detective answered—

"Not to me, but Garth knows you're in town." Then in his relief Brenner went on, gratis: "Scully just told me—he's night-man on front—that orders were out to clean up everything, the big ones first. That means you—or any man that might be dangerous—not in Garth's happy family."

Here, the bartender coming within ear-shot, Brenner stopped to shake his head. When the barman had withdrawn the detective went on cautiously: "You better see Garth quick or make a clean getaway. He's due inside an hour, and there's some kind of a big job on—get me?"

"I got you! I'll square you for this, Brenner. But listen. Tip your friend Scully—the night-man—to lay off me—'way off! I ain't healthy tonight. And I'll give you this—*Garth will come to me*—and he will come soon."

"Will I tell him you're here?" Brenner asked respectfully.

"He's wise, you poor gook! He's got a special dick—a Pink—keeping tab on both you and Scully. I tell you Garth is slipping—and watch out for a scared cur!"

When Wheeler turned his back the little detective looked after the lean, lithe figure with a face gone suddenly pale. The bartender roused him.

"Who's your swell friend, Jim?"

"Ever hear of Sled Wheeler?" Brenner asked soberly.

"Ever hear of S— Say! Is that straight? Hear of him? Why, I was in Chi the night he got Smiling Snead—three—four years ago. But I never lamped the lad before."

And as he mopped the bar with renewed energy the bartender went on with relishing satisfaction:

"So that's the guy himself. I want to state he looks it—not any in mine. Not any! And he don't look more than twenty-one at that—but look at the map on him—whoo-ie! Well—Well!"

And the big man went to polishing glasses with much elbow-motion, his eyes on the door through which the great man had departed, and continued his good-natured talk. At length he noted the detective's worried expression, and was troubled in sympathy with his friend.

"What's the matter Jim? What was the bad-man slippin' you on the side?"

"He said it was nice weather for the time o' year," said Brenner.

"Oh, *all* right! All right! If you're so durn mysterious—beer pretty good, was it? 'Bout the right temprechure?" Ben was aggrieved.

"On the level, Ben, it ain't mine to handle. I'll tell you right now and here, anybody can have my job—if I could only get loose from that da—" Brenner stopped to glance over his shoulder, but continued in a whisper: "There's more than me that's got sick of this bloody business—it ain't human, and something is goin' to drop before long—you hear me. I hope we're both here to see it, that's all!"

"Say! Quit spillin' the tragedy-stuff—my nerves ain't any too good! You got a bad liver. Go to the gym and yank chest-weights—use the mitts or the foils, or something!" was Ben's well-meant advice.

"Not for a minute! The Boss is all the time doing stunts with the foils—and it sends shivers up my back to look at him!" with another backward glance. "I wish I was on the Bowery."

Brenner passed out of the bar gloomily and slipped through the many guests and loungers in the lobby—a small gray figure among many large breezy men.

For it was a crowd of Californians in the room—picked men who had answered the call of adventure—men above the average in body and spirit. There was something in

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the place and the air that made for bigness and breadth—raised big men, big trees, big ambitions. It was a time and place when fortunes grew to great size overnight—where lies were futile because facts outstripped them. The atmosphere was wine that urged to reckless endeavor, and the unit of small-change was the silver quarter.

Some perception of this stirred young Brendon as he hurried to his room to make the changes as his new friend had ordered.

"Everything in this Western country is surprizing," he was telling himself, "and Dan Wheeler most of all. He's not two years older than I am—I thought he'd be older, and rough." Brendon got into an old coat and cap, pulled the cap down and looked in the mirror. "And he's clean-cut—like a thoroughbred. By Jove!"

He recalled that Drake had told him to show the Chinese merchant—Lu Yan—the letter of introduction he had brought to Garth. It was an unusual request, but Drake knew his business, so the Englishman made sure he had that letter in his pocket—also the revolver Wheeler had demanded.

"He's the sort to make you do things—make a corking officer!" was Brendon's comment as he looked at his watch. "Five minutes more—now to sneak out the side door."

Elated by the mystery of the enterprise, he ran down the stairs and peered into the narrow, foggy street. It was deepening dusk, and one could not see more than five yards. The way to the right lay up-hill, and the dim street-lights seemed to rise and fall in the distance.

"Turn to the right and go slowly," Brendon repeated, and set out.

Few people seemed to use that street—now and then a ghostly figure brushed past him in the murk, to vanish almost within reach. He drew in close to the wall, fell over some narrow steps, regained his balance and bumped into a thin form that squeaked.

Lean arms wrapped round him suddenly; one went under his chin and tightened. He tried to clinch—to punch—but the thin figure twisted round behind him. He was choking, seeing lights, and felt himself lifted from his feet—then he was half-stunned by a glancing blow on the head.

The choking arm was wrenched away. With the first gasp of relief he was jerked to his feet and dragged stumbling up the hilly street. He was drinking in big gulps of air, trying to get enough breath to shout, when a hand was clapped over his mouth;

"Sh-h-h! Holler and you land us in jail!" It was Wheeler's voice in his ear. "Hep up! Come out of this!" And again he was haled through the murky dusk until, under a corner lamp-post, Dan stopped to turn him round for a quick inspection.

"You are all right, but that was no merry jest—and no time to spare," was Dan's verdict. "You bumped into one of Garth's tong stranglers, and he took you for somebody else—me perhaps! I unwound him and set him onto the fool shadow that was tailing me—by pure luck! Listen! They are mixing it yet, somewhere in the fog."

"Most extr'ord'n'ry place!" puffed Brendon, feeling gingerly at the lump over his ear. But he meant San Francisco, and he was right.

At this period the city government was confused and graft-riddled. Labor troubles, following the influx of Chinese after the finishing of the Central Pacific, filled the streets with rioting by day. By night death in many forms stalked the streets unafraid. Already solid citizens had met to talk of reviving the Vigilantes, and the need for drastic action grew greater daily.

Brendon was beginning to think of announcing that he had got his breath, but his guide did not wait.

"Come! On your toes!"

He was off, up the hill, and with aching chest the Englishman labored after in desperate effort to keep Wheeler in sight. The swift figure ahead seemed to skim the ground without contact, like a ghost in the heavy fog. It was always just about to vanish, and its speed became greater as Brendon made more painful endeavors to catch up with it.

He opened his mouth more than once to call for a halt, or for help, but each time a new spurt of speed took all the breath he had in him. With teeth set he resolved to run until he dropped in silence.

They were at times in streets almost deserted—dark and ruinous, of a strange, musty smell—where only a rare dark shadow darted into black basement-holes as they passed. Again he thought he caught the creak or rattle of a furtively closed door in the gloom at his side. He ground his teeth and strained the harder to catch the tireless wraith in front—and it fled still faster.

When he was about at the end of his

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strength he noticed that the light was better —the streets a bit wider and more populous. Soon the figures seemed clearer and less furtive—they even stopped to talk, and the cackling singsong came to his ears in waves as he flew past.

And all at once they were in a narrow maze of light and color—where they had to stop and worm their way among the many Chinamen who passed back and forth between the queer little shops that were right on the sidewalk. In cues and loose frocks they chattered and haggled over heathen dainties. The fog had gone and the air was full of mixed smells—as unreadable as the up-and-down signs overhead on sign-boards and lanterns.

They emerged upon a still wider street—where one could not reach from wall to wall —and stopped before a temple of Buddha where the odors narrowed down to the range of incense and spices of the East. Nor was there any fog. Brendon looked for something to collapse upon, while he drew long, sobbing breaths.

"Get your wind!" Dan said unnecessarily. He was breathing deep and easily himself. "You're a bit soft. But time's short, and we got to see Lu Yan and get back to the hotel before Garth. I tried to see him before I met you—but he was out. If he is out now, we are playing in hard luck!"

"It must be—mighty important!" Brendon managed to gasp.

"No—not important—just desperate!" said Dan grimly. "We *got to* see him, or your goose is good as cooked!" He did not wait to explain, but took Brendon's arm. "Come on—you can breathe better walking —and we want to see that Chinaman—bad! We need money, but we need inside dope worse."

"Dope? What—?" It was before the expansion of the term was common.

"I don't mean *hop!*" Dan translated. "I mean inside information—and advice—and influence!"

"He—has—influence, then?" puffed the other.

"He runs Chinatown—and he's one white Chinese gentleman! We sure do desire to meet that man—yes, ma'am!"

Brendon had no notion of the direct danger of death by hired killers that hung over Wheeler at the moment, any more than of the way in which his own fortunes depended on their visit, but he felt the tension in Dan's voice—in the grip on his arm as he was steadied and guided into the chief street of Chinatown.

Already the big merchants and importers had closed their main doors, but at the side of the largest of these houses they entered a narrow blind alley. At its end Dan rapped on a small door.

WHILE the door was still swinging open Dan asked sharply—

"Is Lu Yan in yet?"

The small Chinaman bowed low in the open door.

"Yes—he in. He look for the Honorable Sled," and turned to lead the way up narrow but richly carpeted stairs. Wheeler let out a big breath of relief as he followed.

At the top they found themselves in a narrow hallway. Through curtained doorways one saw glimpses of rooms rich with tapestries and Oriental furnishing, porcelains and lacquered ornaments, silks and brocaded hangings, like the dreams of another Arabian Night.

In the subdued and tinted light of the largest of these rooms—filled with the fragrance of an incense like glorified cleanliness—Lu Yan came forward in robes of ceremony to greet them, but he held out his hand in an American welcome.

"A day long desired, and a night of promise," he said in perfect English, slightly smiling, "that brings an old friend and a new one."

He turned from welcoming Dan to offer his hand to Brendon.

"This is Mr. Brendon—a friend of Drake's," said Dan. "He brings a letter and—something else—from Drake. I came here once before and you were out."

"My anxiety and impatience robbed me of the pleasure," Lu Yan said with resigned sadness. "I heard your steamer was in from Yokohama and I went in search of you—fearing that harm had befallen you."

"Can you beat it?" Dan said to Brendon. "If I'd had the sense to wait right here——"

"The fault was mine in not instructing the servant," Lu Yan interposed. "He should have used his own brains, but I am suitably punished. Now you will rest and give me the greater pleasure."

Already he had somehow got them seated on a low couch, and the noiseless servant had put tea and cakes before them. Dan did not wound his old friend by trying to

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talk until he had eaten and drunk. Even then the merchant was before him with the first topic of importance.

"Another reason for my search," said he, drawing a packet from his robe, "was that I was sure you must be in need of funds for present use, so I had them ready for you."

There were two flat packets of notes and two rolls of gold-pieces. Dan passed one of each to Brendon and pocketed the others without comment. To Brendon's embarrassed efforts to thank them Lu Yan remarked—

"I am merely taking the privilege of being your banker for the present."

"He pulls that stuff right along," added Dan. "You can't stop him."

Before either of them could mention the strange fact that the money was already evenly divided, Lu Yan quietly suggested—

"Was there a letter to Garth?"

"To be sure—I beg pardon." Brendon hastily produced it.

It was a formal letter, introducing Brendon to Garth, but Lu Yan at once brushed the surface with a colorless solution that brought out the words between-lines:

Have both Twins. Tell Dan to stay with Garth and keep gun always ready. I shall see you soon.

"*Gun!*" said Dan. "He knows I always keep a gun ready. And 'both Twins' sounds foolish—but it is *not*."

"Drake is never foolish," said Lu Yan. Then to the Englishman:

"Did you bring something for Dan?"

"That's it—a gun in the box I brought for you!" said Brendon. "I hid it before I left the hotel. It was heavy. We can get it when we get back, but what does——"

He curbed his curiosity and flushed at his presumption. Dan was not so timid.

"What are the 'Twins'? My guess is—sparks! Jewels—what?"

"Why do you hazard that assumption?" Lu Yan asked quickly.

"Just a hunch. But it's a cinch there's big trouble in sight, and it's always a good bet that jewels are in it. Was I right—is it jewels—or a jewel?"

Before answering Lu Yan made sure there was nobody in the passage or within hearing.

"My servant, Motu, has not been with me long, and I am sure he is a spy for Garth. Now there are three reasons why I can not take the time to tell you about the Twins *now*, and the most serious is the danger to the life of Dan Wheeler. Garth has issued orders that he is to be put away at the first opportunity, as many other men have been of late."

"Is he using the tong stranglers?" asked Dan sharply.

"He is—one in particular who seems unfailingly deadly. It is said no man has escaped him."

"They say that about a lot of 'em," said Dan; "over across. That's why the poor sheep just squawk and lie down! Of course they get 'em. This Garth is too raw—he needs setting back. I've got to show him something."

"It would be too fatally dangerous," Lu Yan protested. "You might better remain here until arrangements can be made."

"Can't you see me?" Dan's lips curled with scornful amusement.

"But—my word!" Brendon broke in, wide-eyed with horror. "Why not notify the police?"

"Garth's police—and they'd see the strangler was not interrupted. He would have the whole street to himself and, if the yegg missed me, the bulls would run me in—or try it!" He turned to Lu Yan. "How about the big man—Senator Sands?"

"He is said to be about at the end of his patience—disgusted with Garth's bloody excesses—and there is some complaining in other quarters. But as yet Garth's rule in the city is absolute—and he becomes more insolent and desperate daily. It is my opinion that your best course at present would be to accept a position in Garth's employ."

"Right!" said Dan after a moment of thought. "But I don't see this hiding proposition, for a minute. Listen to me."

Dan leaned forward and spoke in a low, intent voice, without gesture or emphasis of tone:

"Drake has something special in mind. He is in a hurry. He wants me to be close to Garth—soon as possible—and I want that package at the hotel before it has been opened. Lastly—I know Garth and his kind, and the thing to do is to make him sit up—to show—him—something!"

"You mean?" Lu Yan whispered.

"I mean that I know the street where that strangler is waiting for me—and the street will be cleared, nobody in sight, before or after! Other streets the same. I could

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dodge him, and still have him waiting for another chance—or for Garth's order—but time is short, and the quickest way to show Garth something is to go right down that street."

Lu Yan was troubled and anxious, but he controlled his features as he weighed the matter. Then he admitted—

"No doubt you understand better than I the working of the mind of a man of blood."

"You're dead right I do!" Dan assented. "The way is to shake him up—show him something—I know!"

"I could send a body-guard of hatchet-men with you——"

"And start another tong war!" Dan shook his head. "*You* know it won't do, with something big just ready to break. We need all the time and all the help we got."

"No doubt you are right—boldness is often the best precaution," Lu Yan sighed, as he handed Brendon the letter which he had dried to its original formal innocence, closed and sealed. "Mr. Brendon, hold to this new friend as 'with hooks of steel.' Such friends are very precious and very rare—remember that when you are annoyed with him."

"I will—thank you, sir! I can't thank you as I—er—want to. I hope I may come again soon?" Brendon stood blushing, beautifully reverential.

"My poor abode will be dark until you come again—the old live only in the light of youth about them. Remember and be generous!" Lu Yan held Dan's hand a moment longer, and spoke with forced evenness. "You are armed—with a Colt?"

"Yes—but I sha'n't use it. I learned a trick or two at this game, over there where they began it. Good night—don't worry!"

Lu Yan shook his head in wistful silence, standing still in the middle of the wealth and luxury of his apartments—a pathetic figure that even Dan could not leave without pausing in the door to wave his hand airily.

Both the young men went down the stairs where Motu held open the door.

The sight of the little Chinaman reminded Dan of Garth, and he rumbled a low curse as he gritted his teeth. Brendon thought he heard once more a muttered—

"Show him something."

They started back by the same straight route, now not quite so thick with fog but much blacker with the falling night. The Englishman was still reviewing the new impressions he had just received of the cultured and courtly Chinese gentleman who dispensed gold and good sense—quoted Confucius and *Polonius*, and spoke of mysteries about them. The whole episode was a dream—improbable and overdone—especially this strangler business!

With a sudden shock and return of terror he recalled his own escape as he had set out from the hotel. If that could happen within hail of the Regal, was it possible that Wheeler proposed to walk deliberately into the trap prepared for him?

In India Brendon had seen the bodies of men who had been killed by stranglers, and he knew the deadly certainty of these inhuman monsters, trained from childhood in their grisly profession until the strongest of wrestlers was an easy victim of the smooth, silken cord. Often the head was almost severed from the body—he sickened and shivered at the picture.

Yet he felt restrained from making any protest—as if in the power of a force like the tides or the roll of the earth on its axis. He followed Wheeler like a man tongue-tied by nightmare, and no word was spoken until Dan stopped him at the entrance to a particularly dark and narrow down-hill street on the edge of the Chinese quarter.

The fog had thinned, but for the whole length of the alley not a moving thing was in sight.

"Where—where are they?" Brendon whispered with parched mouth and throat.

"Now you're talking—that's the question!" Dan said crisply. "Keep close to me until I stop you, and don't speak."

He walked slowly down the decline, keeping to the middle of the way. Not a light showed in door or window, but Brendon fancied he could feel malicious eyes on him from all sides. Abruptly Wheeler stopped—drew him down a few steps into a dark basement-entrance and carefully felt the door at the bottom.

"Door barred outside—you will be safe here if you *keep still*. Now, no matter what happens, don't peep. Do me no good, and it might be your last peep! Get it?" Wheeler whispered jerkily.

"Yes, but what if——"

"If I don't came back for you in five minutes—no matter what has happened in that time—you hit the high spots on the back trail, to Lu Yan. It's almost a straight line—can you do it?"

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"Yes, but this is no way to stand by a chap who is going into danger! I don't like——"

"Never mind what you *like*—there will be worse and more of it! Did you ever see a man killed in cold blood?" Wheeler's voice was hoarse, and Brendon shivered at the sound.

"——! No!"

"Well—you will, so dig in your toe-nails and bite on your teeth! It will make you sick, but not a peep, remember!"

Wheeler was out of reach, moving slowly down the incline in the middle of the dark passage.

THE Englishman held himself in the little stairway, head just above the street-level, eyes fixed on the dark outline of Dan stealing catlike down the alley.

Could he hold himself still if he saw his friend set upon by a gang of murderers? Ought he to obey such an order? What had Lu Yan said? His heart was pounding until it seemed as if the street must be filled with the echoes of its beats.

What was that? Only a few paces farther down, a tumble-down stair overhung the narrow walk, and Dan was drawing aside to pass it—to avoid its treacherous shadow. Brendon held his breath, nerves taut and muscles pulling, as he strained his eyes into the blackness.

Dan was past it—safe so far?

No! From the opposite wall and behind Wheeler a lank figure dropped like a hobgoblin—landed fair on Dan's defenseless back!

In black silhouette Brendon saw thin arms flick out and wrap, with moves so quick they tricked the eye. Both figures merged in one—a black mass that jerked and swayed—fell—flopped and bounded on the ground, grotesquely like a huge black hen with head fresh-chopped off.

The dark mass settled—still for a moment—while from it rose slowly the outline of a head and shoulders—Wheeler's head and shoulders, free!

The shoulders did not rise full-height, but stopped as if Dan sat, and heaved—rocked to the right—then to the left—with slow, tense effort. Farther yet with a twisting strain——

Then the silence was torn by a quacking squawk that choked slowly, as if wrung from a crushed gullet.

The heaving shoulders rocked—farther yet to the sound of a low, long, muffled crunch—ended in a heavy, wet *crack*. And with that last obscene sound the dark body underneath flung out and up two lean long shanks, at a ridiculous angle, that stiffened with a fine tremor—then fell slowly, with a series of horrible jerking kicks.

There was an instant of perfect silence—stillness—then Brendon saw somebody coming toward him, but he could not move his horrified gaze from the flat thing on the ground. Somebody was speaking, close beside him.

"Come on!" in a hoarse whisper. "No use waiting!"

But Brendon licked dry tongue on drier lips and croaked—

"M—my—gug——!"

Now Wheeler was shaking his shoulder in a grip that hurt.

"Wake up. Swim out! You need a drink—come get it!"

"Not that way—not past that—" Brendon pulled back feebly, when his arm was pulled straight—palm up—across Dan's left forearm and he was hustled helplessly down the incline at a trot, straight to the outstretched body.

When he reached the thing, Wheeler stopped long enough to stoop and drag from beneath it an evil-looking cord like a slender snake. This he furled and pocketed with one hand while Brendon stared down at what had been Garth's chief strangler.

The body lay very flat and thin, on its stomach, yet Brendon saw with a wave of nausea that the bloated face—with black tongue out in a foul grimace—*stared straight up at him!*

"Co—mgg! Come away!"

Brendon gagged and clapped his handkerchief to both mouth and nose. Again a steely hand on his arm hurried him on and down, to where the alley came out on a wider street. Here Wheeler let him go, with a short—

"You're all right—breathe deep!"

But when, after a few long breaths, Wheeler reached for his arm again Brendon shrank away from his touch. Snatching back his hand as if it were burned, Dan was off at the same easy, gliding step, not even a look behind to see if he were coming.

Like an automaton the Englishman kept within a few paces. He found that with each lungful of air his sickness was lessened,

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his vision clearing. Faster and still faster they hurried from street to wider street in absolute silence. When at last they came to broad Market Street Brendon pulled up abreast to ask shyly—

"Won't they find that—back there?"

"Gone, long ago," said Wheeler shortly, without turning his face; "in the bay before morning—not a thing in the papers, any more than if it was my stiff lying back there!"

A graceful wave of his hand indicated that the incident was closed. Even Brendon knew that, with the prevailing riots and anti-Chinese disturbances, the police were too busy with open crimes in daylight to give any time to a dead Chinaman or so. But he was still swept now and then by a wave of nausea, and he was vaguely disturbed by the shrinking he felt toward Wheeler.

Even as they walked, he shrank from the touch of Dan's shoulder. He didn't want to talk—didn't want to meet those long green eyes with the light in them devil-dancing—at least until he had got his stomach settled and his nerves untangled.

When they were within a few blocks of the hotel Wheeler stopped on a corner. After a swift look into Brendon's pale face he gruffly said:

"You better go in alone. Go in at the side entrance—get a stiff drink and dress for dinner—don't wait for me!"

Just then a knot of young people passed, and Wheeler dropped behind the Englishman to make way for them. When Brendon turned to look for him he was nowhere in sight.

II

ANXIOUS at first, Brendon soon found he was drawing great breaths of relief and relaxation. He walked more slowly, and gave himself up to the enjoyment of the nearness of normal young people—at this hour mostly pleasure-seekers or folks going to "supper." When within a block of the hotel he stepped back at a crossing to avoid a carriage-wheel, and collided with some one stepping off the curb. For a moment each caught at the other to save themselves from the passing wheel.

He found himself embracing a most fascinating young woman. His hat was hardly off to apologize to her escort when she cried out in a rich voice that thrilled him:

"Why! It's Lord Brendon! And we had just given up looking for you!"

Flushed and more beautiful than ever, she introduced her companion—

"This is Mr. Garth—Lord Brendon—you don't need any further introduction."

"I should say not!" Garth gave the Englishman a smooth limp hand and a glistening smile as he purred on in his smooth, soft voice: "Especially since the evening papers have given our visiting nobleman such a lot of head-lines. They have just gotten hold of your presence and accession to the title, my lord, and are featuring them to the limit. That is why we were so anxious for your safety, and we started out to look for you."

Ghost Garth was neither white nor ghastly, but a vivid and sparkling personage. Rich color tinted his olive cheeks, his smooth smiling lips were a bright red, and he showed a lot of glistening teeth at the same time. For he smiled too much and too long at a time.

That smile at first flash looked boyish and pleasant, then it got too bright—like the stone in his scarf and the shine on his boots—it became insolent and contemptuous in its bold abandon. It looked like: "Yes—I laugh at you—at myself, it is true, but it is all absurd—a dog-eat-dog world, and I can eat you if I feel like it! What are you going to do about it?"

While Brendon was getting an impression something like this, the girl was saying eagerly—

"So you see you must let us use the title now—we shall *so* much enjoy it!"

"Thus proving our American independence and ingrained snobbishness!" Garth commented with his smile working overtime.

"And you simply must not prowl about alone after dark!" urged Lina Westcott with serious anxiety that warmed Brendon's heart. "Mr. Garth can tell you how dangerous it is!"

"It is true that certain streets are unsafe, especially about Chinatown just now," said Garth. "Mrs. Westcott was naturally concerned, and she was sure that was just where you would go. I did my best to assure her that you would return alive—not even seriously wounded. Was I right?"

"I—er—I beg pardon?" Brendon looked rather dull and stupid, and that meant he was thinking.

He was deciding that it might be as well,

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on the whole, to mention Wheeler. Since Dan wanted Garth to know that he had destroyed his strangler-in-chief it might help to inform the smiling Boss that his game was known to others as well. So he spoke with his broadest accent:

"You—aw—you mean to ahsk if I was—aw—attacked? It would appear that I was not—er—fatally injured, don't you know—What?"

As he saw Garth's smile fade and a suspicious look come into his black eyes, Brendon drove his stroke home with smooth precision:

"But I was not alone, really. I was with a chap who is stopping here, and *he* was—er—*attacked*, if you like, and rather desperately. If he had not been a perfectly ripping athlete and fighter himself, don't you know, he would have been—er—strangled—killed, y'know!"

The girl had come to a stand at the climax, but Garth asked sharply—

"Staying at this hotel—what was his name?"

"Wheeler, Dan Wheeler—perfectly ripping chap, you——"

"Dan Wheeler—here!" The girl seized his arm. "Was he hurt?"

"Not a bit—no fault of the strangler chap though, I assure you!"

"Thank Heaven for that!" the girl breathed. "He is a special friend of ours, you know." To Garth: "My father would do anything for him—he owes Dan Wheeler a lot. You must have heard of him."

"Oh, certainly—everybody has heard of Sled Wheeler here—quite a famous character, but I never met him." Garth's smile was in eclipse and for an instant he showed signs of having got a jolt. "So he was attacked, somewhere in Chinatown—I believe you said?"

He addressed the question to Brendon across the girl as they walked on toward the ladies' entrance of the hotel.

"It was in Chinatown, but I did *not* say so!"

The answer came so sharply and incisively that Garth shot another look of surprize at Brendon's innocent face, then at the girl, but she had not noticed it. She was eager to get inside.

"Let's hurry—I want to see Dan. But why should he be attacked so soon after his return? He must have just arrived from abroad."

"An enemy in Chinatown, perhaps." Garth had his smile warmed up again and directed it at Brendon. "They never forget—these Celestials—he should be more careful."

They turned into the hotel at that moment, and Garth stood back to hold the open door. As Brendon followed the girl in Garth detained him a second to ask in a whisper—

"Was the strangler laid out?"

"Cold! Broke his neck with bare hands," Brendon responded, low but distinctly.

He saw the flicker of alarm pass over the ruthless, insolent face of the Boss, and from that moment all repulsion he felt for Dan was burned out in his hot hate for such a coldly murderous brute.

He managed to look what Dan would call "stupid" as he watched Garth making himself agreeable to Lina Westcott.

In the warm hallway she had thrown back her wrap, and her beauty went to the head like wine. Garth rather prided himself on having no self-control where women were concerned—if they were young and attractive—and he was doing his best to make an impression on Lina. At the moment, however, she was smiling at his lordship.

"It will be delightful to have you both here together—you and Dan Wheeler." The look she gave him made his heart skip a beat. "Dad is a warm admirer of Dan, and so am I."

She made the announcement with frankness, flushing slightly—but it was at the look on Brendon's face. Garth did not miss it, and his face became sullenly vindictive. When the girl flashed a look that surprized him in that mood, he attempted to carry it off with a burlesque of stage-villainy.

"How now, minion?" he growled in a heavy bass. "Woman—beware my vengeance! I brook no rivals. An this churl hath stol'n thy heart by foul enchantment, I'll e'en cleave him to the weasand! Aye—I'll have his heart's bul-lood!"

And he thrust his snarling face close to hers—teeth bared, and long black hair falling over his evil beady eyes. He overdid it—the real cruelty and abnormal blood-thirst of the man leaped out of its artificial sheath. Lina shrank from him, hand at her throat, staring at the horrid reality she now saw for the first time.

"Don't — I — you — you really hurt —

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frighten me. Please—" Her lip trembled, and Brendon's fists clenched.

"I say! that will be enough, you know. She—" He began sharply, but Garth was already abasing himself.

"Go on. Kick me—I need it! I was trying to be funny, and succeeded in being an ugly brute. Please forgive me, little girl. If you will, I will do anything for you—for any friend of yours—anything you can ask. I will do better—I will not wait to be asked. Listen!" He held out both hands appealingly and went on in a soft, caressing voice:

"If you and your aunt will give a dinner-party tonight—a dinner-and-theater party, for Booth plays 'Hamlet' you know—I will provide the dinner, the box, the flowers, and the orchestra for the dance to follow in the Regal ballroom. And I will not even ask for an invitation—until I am forgiven. Is there any hope?"

And for the time his face was almost pathetic—his voice wonderfully flexible and sympathetic—he had a demon's insight into the desires and affections of others, even though he had no heart himself.

Lina could not help smiling at the prospect.

"You may come. It is very generous and thoughtful of you—and I do believe you have an angel-streak in you at times," she said shyly.

"Merely reflected, I assure you," said Garth bitterly, "for nobody else ever got a glimpse of it!"

Whether the man was touched by any genuine remorse, or had coldly decided to make a virtue of necessity, at any rate he went further in his attempt to please:

"And I think I need your friend Wheeler—I want a manager for the Cascade Club, and that will keep him near by. We can have a suite with his lordship on the same floor with you and your uncle and aunt, so that you will have all your slaves at your beck and call. I must see Wheeler at once!"

And he bowed gracefully, making an effective exit to the music of her renewed thanks.

Leaving Brendon to escort the girl to her rooms Garth made his way through the crowd in the lobby to the desk. The lofty clerk lost his hauteur and began to sweat obsequiously at the distant view of the Boss.

"Put Lord Brendon in suite sixteen, and Wheeler in eighteen," the proprietor ordered sharply, "and make no charge against Wheeler until I give the word—understand?"

"Yes, sir; anything else, sir?"

"Where is Wheeler—has he come in?" Garth lighted a cigar at the match which the clerk held ready for him.

"Yes, sir—just went through into the bar."

Garth turned away without a look at the anxious clerk, but caught the quick eye of Scully the night-dick, shook his head lightly and sauntered into the barroom.

"That lets me out," Scully confided to his friend when he had cautiously made sure the proprietor was out of sight; "so far as this man Wheeler is concerned. I rise to remark that I weep no bitter tears over that. Say, fellow! But that same Sled Wheeler is one awful fatal piece of mechanism to monkey with! He knows more tricks than a circus mule, and things begin to crack loose as soon as he looms on the horizon—yes, sir! Right then things begin to happen in chunks! A live wire *and* a hot-babe-a-coming to——"

"Turn it off!" cautioned the clerk. "You'll leave that face running some day and it will run you into trouble!"

"I want *to* know! Dew tell! Not so long as I talk at a mark—like you," retorted the other cheerfully. "And how do you get into that collar—with a step-ladder?"

"Shadow me and find out. Brush by, boy! Here come some real folks with works in their heads!"

Some new arrivals approached the desk; and the dick, garrulous with relief, wandered off to find another mark to talk at.

WHEELER was just finishing a plain lemonade at the bar when he saw Garth's round, sallow face beside his own. Their eyes met in the mirror with instant recognition. At the same moment, Dan knew from the Boss's expression that he had won.

"Dan Wheeler, do you want a job?"

Garth sent away the bartender with a glance. Wheeler set down his glass deliberately and wiped his thin lips.

"No—but I want the money, and other things."

"You get 'em—your own terms, and the best the house affords with no charge."

Garth was no piker, and his way with men was uncanny. No other course he could

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have taken—no other word he could have said—would have got under the skin of the man he addressed like this reckless generosity. He knew how priceless would be the loyal efforts of a man like Wheeler, and he was making a bid for him.

"You are not hiring a mankiller, you understand!" Dan said dryly. "What do I do?"

"I am trying to hire Sled Wheeler," said Garth. "I thought he was a broad-gage man, who didn't drive a hard bargain."

"That's a sweet one—it hurt!" Dan admitted with a curl of his lip. "But I sign no blank checks, and I kill at the word of no man."

"Then it's all off?" carelessly.

"Yes—your bluff doesn't go—talk business! What do I do?"

"Run the Cascade Club, and run it right."

Garth grinned almost honestly.

"You can have twenty per cent. of the proceeds, or a fixed salary beside your keep and expenses. Special arrangement for any outside job. Well?"

"You have hired Dan Wheeler — from midnight tonight," said Dan. "I will take the percentage."

"Wait!" Garth said, as Dan was turning away. "I want a live one at the wheel tonight, between eleven and twelve. Go on at eleven."

"No — midnight — sharp!" said Dan crisply, on the general principle that Garth must have some reason for the request, and it would not do to give in. "I am my own man until midnight."

"These talented artists!" Garth shrugged. "So eccentric and emotional!"

Then, with smile flashing—

"I suppose you can condescend to go to Miss Lina's theater-party if she asks you?"

"If she asks me I shall be glad." Dan looked Garth in the eyes levelly.

A slow color came in his face. It was only four years since he had fallen in love with Lina Drake. Nobody ever knew why she had chosen the other man—nobody cared to ask Dan—but her name still had the power to move him. Where women—real women—were concerned, Dan had ideas and ideals that he never changed. The man who tried any off-color pleasantries with Dan on this subject was always unfortunate. Garth had a feminine perception in such matters—he looked at Dan's eyes and his smile slowly faded.

Entered Lord Brendon at this moment, frowning and protesting as he came.

"I say you know—this won't do! I found two porter-chaps hustling my luggage about —said they had orders to move them to the second floor. I can't af——"

"Just in time, your lordship, to witness a contract." Garth spoke gaily and waved a hand at Wheeler. "Dan Wheeler has consented to run the Cascade Club for me."

"That's awfully jolly—congratulate you both—but about those rooms and the porter-chaps——"

"One moment, your lordship!" Garth broke in suavely. "That is part of the contract. I fancied you two would enjoy the double suite—two bedrooms and private baths—all that sort of thing, you know!"

If Garth thought his lordship did not detect his delicate burlesque of the British brogue, he was mistaken.

"But I say! I can't afford it, you know!" Brendon stated frankly.

"That is what I am trying to tell you—you are my guests while Mr. Wheeler is in my employ. It is a—a part of the emoluments—all that sort of thing." Garth smiled.

Brendon cast a shy side-glance at Wheeler, who was absorbed in study of Garth's face—apparently unconscious of what was being said.

"Then I should be under obligations to you or Mr. Wheeler." The Britisher was not to be muddled. "I should enjoy being with him, and all that——"

"Obligations nothing!" Dan interrupted bruskly. "Costs me nothing, and trust Garth to get his money's worth. If you can stand me around I'll try to bear it. Do you snore?"

"Everybody happy!" Garth chimed in. "Step up, gentlemen!" to all the interested bystanders, "it's on the house—everybody drinks the health of our titled guest and the new manager of the Cascade Club, Sled Wheeler!"

As the drinks went up, and down, one man at the far end of the bar told his companion:

"Garth never misses a chance to advertise. Sled Wheeler will draw big money to the roulette-wheel."

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"STOMACH settled yet?" Dan asked as he and his lordship walked up the broad stairs together.

Without waiting for an answer he asked another—

"How do you like the Big Boss?"

"I—er—hardly know. He muddles my wits, like the giant in the story." Brendon smiled, then blushed. "I admit I felt just a bit—er—sort of squeamish, after what happened in that dirty alley." He opened his eyes wide. "And there we were, inside the half-hour, drinking with the very man who had hired the strangler to murder you. By Jove! How does he do it and go unhung?"

"He has different tricks," said Wheeler carelessly. "He hires one man—always one alone—to kill another. Then hires a third to kill the killer, and so on! That way he never has but one man to kill, himself, if his hired man goes back on him. That's one of his best stunts."

People passing on the stairs, nudging one another to look at the real English lord, stopped further talk until they reached their new rooms. They were light and airy, richly furnished, and overlooked the street.

"But this is top-hole, really!" Brendon looked about the large "parlor" with approval. "We shall do ourselves well here. This Garth is not what you'd call a piker—what? I don't suppose he has people strangled in their beds?"

Wheeler was going through the bedrooms, and tapping the walls expertly here and there. He seemed not to hear the question.

"Take a look at your 'luggage,' old top!" he said as he continued his investigations. "See if they frisked your kack! No—it wouldn't be good for business to croak 'em in the hotel."

"I beg pardon? Frisked my——"

"See if they have searched your 'luggage'—gone through it, or opened that package you brought," Dan explained. "Now is a good time to hand it over, if it hasn't been pinched."

"Of course—very stupid of me!" Brendon went into his bedroom where he found his bag unopened and his clothing neatly put away. "They must have a real valet on the premises," he commented. "And here is the package with the seal untouched."

"Again we play in luck—Garth is losing his grip!" was Dan's cryptic remark as he opened the heavy box. Inside lay a beautiful blued Colt .45, a box of loaded shells and a card. Dan read aloud:

"This will never fail you. Carry it day and night until I ask for it."

Dan took out the gun reverently, balanced it, threw it down from the shoulder—up from the hip, drew it from under his left arm and did the "Road-Agent's Spin." Lastly he tested the hammer-spring, spun the cylinder, and broke down the gun to fill it with cartridges.

All this time he was muttering thoughtfully:

"Hm! He knows I always carry a rod. She's a queen! But so is the old one. It means there's something special doing—and Drake has brains. What he says goes with little Dan! Here's where I do something I don't do once in a coon's-age—change guns!"

From under his left arm he took the concealed gun he always carried in a special harness. When he had put the new one in its place he shook himself, testing the feel of it, and drew it twice to see that it came out pleasantly. Then with a loving look at the old companion he handed it to Brendon.

"Can you hit anything with a Colt? All right. *She* won't fail you either. There's a gallery at the club, and I'll show you! Put yours away in your trunk."

"Thanks awfully!" Brendon thought of the souvenir value in the future—"Sled Wheeler's Gun"—when he would show it in his club at home. While he was attempting to express his gratitude Wheeler was studying the card, and interrupted presently:

"That's all right. What do you know about this business that's bringing Drake here?"

"He has sold out in Chicago—coming for the climate, for one thing," said Brendon. "But he hopes to sell that mine—our mine I told you about. He says it ought to make us both rich men, if we can get half what it is worth. I am sure I hope it does—I shall be a beggar if I lose—Brendon Court was heavily mortgaged when it came to me."

"What's the matter with the mine?"

"Drake says the ore is there—rich ore—in sight," said his lordship hastily.

"Yes—I know—but there's a joker somewhere, or you fellows could not get it for less than it will sell for. Tell me!"

"Drake got it from the prospectors, who

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proved their claims and quit," said Brendon. "But Garth bought adjoining claims on both sides, and there is doubt about lines or veins —some such bally rot. Nobody wants to pay big money for a lawsuit—don't you know—especially with this man Garth."

"*Now* I got you!" said Dan. "Let's swim!"

As they splashed in their private bathrooms Brendon called across—

"Drake thinks he can make a deal with Garth—they are old friends."

"Sure! Friends—hm! *Ouch!*"

"What's that?"

"Nothing—soap in my eye."

When they were getting into evening dress Brendon confided some more.

"I lie awake nights thinking what I will do to the old place, and how I shall fix up the cottages. The things that money can do to a fine old country estate—you've no idea!" shyly apologetic.

"No? I saw one or two—I got this claw-hammer in London—Strand.

"Well—there's just one answer!" Dan kicked his trousers straight.

"I beg pardon?"

"You got to get the money—a big wad—and I guess maybe perhaps we shall have to see about it, some day when we have a minute to spare. When is Drake coming?"

"Started already, I fancy. There is something mysterious about——"

"Mysterious—not half so mysterious as it is rushing! Whatever it is—it is coming, and coming on the jump! And there are sparks mixed up in it somewhere—Drake is buggy about jewels—remember the 'Twins' he told Lu Yan about? And *now* we come to *real* trouble—trouble in bales and barrels! I'd rather be—strangled!"

"What do you mean? I——" Brendon walked across to see about it.

"This!" Dan interrupted, holding up his narrow white tie. "Can you wrastle the —— thing? If I tackle it they'll call out the fire department!" Dan looked at the innocent string with a hostile eye.

"Let's see—stand still—hold up your chin—you don't want to bully 'em—or humor 'em. Take a careless, familiar middle ground—cuff 'em into shape offhand—like that, see?"

"Man—that is a work of art!"

Dan admired the result in the mirror, where he saw a thoroughbred athlete in dinner-dress with a tie that was careless perfection.

"That's where you show your blue blood, Lord Percy Brendon of Brendon Court, right there! It takes the descendant of a long line of belted earls to snarl up a little poem like that!"

Dan could talk English when he chose—generally he didn't choose.

"Why did they call 'em belted? I gathered the impression it was the understrappers—churls, was it?—that got belted."

"Because they need it when they're young, I fancy," said Brendon. "You look more the gentleman than nine out of ten——"

"It's the tie! Nobody will take me for a waiter now!" Dan broke in exultantly. "And just for that, your lordship, I am going to see you get your little old mine, spite of Garth or the devil—and you hear me!"

He spoke in the seriously quizzical tone he used only when he was pleased; but in the long, gleaming eyes there was a look that sobered his lordship at once. It recalled to the Englishman the tales Drake had told him of the unbelievable exploits of the youth before him—so young and good to look at, yet with a flickering green light in his eyes that made one feel queer. Moreover, he felt an instinctive attraction that prompted him to hold out his hand.

"Thanks—mighty good of you, Dan," he said shyly. "Some time I hope I can—you know——"

"Certainly!"

Dan caught the hand in a quick, warm clasp and as quickly dropped it.

"Sure! Words don't win the money. Speaking of winning the money, there's a half-hour before dinner. Shall we take a look at the Cascade Club—my job after tonight?"

THEY went down the main stairway, again attracting much admiring attention, and as they passed the desk Dan advised leaving the greater part of their cash in the office safe. When this was done he led the way, like one familiar with the place, back through the billiard-room. A door at the rear opened into a long covered passage known as "the tunnel," and used by the guests as a short-cut across the block to the big club building on the parallel back-street.

The Cascade Athletic Club was at this time the swell social and gambling club of the city. Dan pointed out the large

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gymnasium that occupied two stories of one-half the building, but turned away to the left of the entrance-hall, to the stairs leading to the lounge or chief club-room.

Here were several men smoking or reading the papers, and more than half of them got up to welcome Dan and his friend.

"But here's where the money comes in!" Dan said as he opened the door to the roulette and faro room in the rear. "Nothing doing at this hour."

There were only a few men in the large and luxuriously furnished room, and they were grouped about the faro layout at the far end. The little ball in the roulette-bowl stood silent in one of its fateful little stalls, while behind the long green table a fat man snoozed peacefully in his high arm-chair—a dull and unpromising scene for one looking for excitement.

Wheeler took one keen look around the room, a longer look at the serene sleeper behind the deserted table—at the stacked chips and coins in rolls at his elbow.

"Hm!" was the only comment of the soon-to-be manager of the Cascade Club. But his lips twitched as he murmured something to his companion. The thick carpet absorbed all sound as Dan stepped round the long table, behind the fat man—his sensitive hands flitted over the corpulent body, light as thistle-down, removing watch and chain from the globular vest and exploring all the other pockets with a magic touch. In less than the time of telling he had finished, drawn out the table-drawer, lifted out a revolver and removed the shells, replaced the empty gun and returned to the front of the table beside Brendon.

The faro-dealer across the room had stopped dealing, and the players had turned to watch Dan's movements. One of them had whispered a question and the dealer grumbled a low answer:

"That's Sled Wheeler—going to run the joint. You, Dan!" he called softly across the room. "What's doing? Let us in!"

"S-st! Lord Brendon and I are going to hold up the house," Dan answered in a stage whisper. "Hold up your hands when he pulls his rod, please!"

He was folding his handkerchief cornerwise, and now caught it round his face below his eyes.

"Now, Brendon—stick 'em up!"

While the men put up their hands and pulled down their faces, Dan leaned far over the wheel and rapped the sleeper smartly on the head with the barrel of his own gun.

"Up! Put 'em up, neighbor!" he called out crisply.

"Mm-ya— Wha-wha-wha— What th——"

The fat man yammered while his hands flew up even before his eyes came open.

"Keep 'em up—*high!*" Wheeler rapped out. "A bird to run a swell gambling-joint—you are, I don't think! Asleep at the switch—yah!"

Meanwhile he stuffed notes and coins into his pocket with his free hand.

"You ought to stick to the old shell-game on the hick circuit, 'Oily' Perkins! I am taking a payment on John Bannigan's account, Perk—remember the 'educated shell'? It was a good game—go back to it! Thank *you!* And you too, gentlemen!" He turned to bow to the faro-crowd, back to the staring Perkins. "All right, Brendon—get away!"

"*Yah! Now* it's hands up for *yours!*" Perkins' voice cracked in his eager excitement. He had his empty gun on Wheeler, none too steadily, as he shrieked—

"Quick—put them up!"

Dan took off and pocketed his handkerchief as he faced about.

"What if I don't, Perk?" The long, yellow-green eyes narrowed as he leaned across the table almost to the shaking gun-muzzle. "You can't shoot—you lack the nerve. Put that gun down!"

It was one of the things, often told, that usually pass for lies. But Wheeler did it four different times in his life, before quite different witnesses. He held Perkins' eyes with his own—not more than five seconds—and the man made a visible effort to pull the trigger. His muscles would not work—the gun wabbled, dropped crashing among the chips on the table—and Perkins seemed to relax helpless in his chair with his eyes held motionless on Dan's.

"Dan Wheeler," he whispered, "or I'm a nanny-goat! Oh, *all right!* You got me—I suppose it's me for the tall timber now, if you say so. But have you carried that spite four years, to jump on me when I'm down? I didn't think it of you, Dan!" Suddenly he turned pale with fright. "Say—gimme time to get the first train East, or Garth will have me behind bars for this. Will you?"

He felt for his watch and money—pawed his empty pockets for a moment—threw himself back in the chair and jammed his

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hands to the elbows in his trousers-pockets with a hopeless wail.

"All right—*a-all* right—Anything else? Want my pants?"

The spectators—hung in doubt between comedy and tragedy, for there is no man more soft-hearted than your true gambler—came down with a roar. Even Dan flashed one of his rare lightning smiles.

"Forget it, Perkins! I didn't know you were on the job until I saw your round tummy. You know darn well I never nurse a small spite."

Dan was disgorging his valuables as he talked in a lower tone.

"Garth has no say in the matter—I am running this job after tonight, and I don't know a better man for your place. Keep it under your hat!"

"You're a white man, Wheeler!" Perkins said soberly. "And I got something I'll tell you, for this," he finished in a whisper.

"Good—just keep your face closed—I'll ask you for it. And you, gentlemen, please keep this to yourselves for the present. Perk is a good man and we need him. By the way—get him to show you his educated-shell game—when he's awake!"

When Dan and Brendon had left the room one of the players remarked:

"This Wheeler seems to have a heart, but you wouldn't think it to look at him. He looks the kind that would never let up on a man."

"Yet there's something about him that gets you," said another.

"He *has* a taking way with him!" commented Perkins, who was filling the chambers of his gun again.

"Even if he didn't want your pants!" mocked the last man.

"I'll never hear the last of that," said Perk resignedly. "But you lobsters take notice—I am filling my hand! And just because a white-hot wire like Wheeler can make me drop a gun, it doesn't follow that *any* red-neck yawp can come along and put one over on Oily Perk—not if I see 'em first! Selah!" And he slammed the gun into the drawer.

CHAPTER III

IN THE ladies' parlor where the dinner-party assembled, Dan was introduced to Senator and Mrs. Sands as well as to divers young people. Garth was there, sparkling his most agreeable, and Lina Westcott was in high spirits. When she had finished the introductions she shared her pleasure with Dan and Brendon.

"This is the most glorious party ever! Mr. Garth has a box for Edwin Booth in 'Hamlet,' we have the handsomest men in the city in our party, and to cap the occasion I have just got a telegram that my father is on his way from Chicago. He had reached Denver, and I am *so* relieved that he has got safely out of Chicago. I know he was in danger all the time he was there."

"When does he arrive?" asked Garth.

"He said he might stop off for a day or two, or he might get here in the morning—tomorrow."

"Stop off? Where? Do you know? I am anxious to see him." Garth tried to speak carelessly, but his eyes betrayed him to Wheeler.

"He has mentioned Bridge Cañon—I think he is interested in mines near there," Lina answered carelessly.

"I think he is," Garth assented dryly.

Dan was watching him, and decided that he must inform Lu Yan at once. Mrs. Sands was assigned to him, and as they formed to go in to dinner Dan asked her how he could escape without giving offense.

"It's hardly a compliment, any way you fix it," she smiled at him. "You might get a messenger-boy to call you out, and do your explaining when you get back. I will send you back here for my fan, and you can fix it with the boy." She dropped the fan behind a chair as they passed out.

Here Dan found it a few minutes later, and seizing the first overcoat at hand—Brendon's Inverness—to cover his conspicuous shirt-front he made his escape. Garth had shown plain impatience to get away, too, and this convinced Dan of the need for haste. He hailed a carriage and in fifteen minutes he was in Lu Yan's apartments. Lu Yan welcomed him as a son returned from the wars.

"I have been walking these floors waiting for news from you," said he solemnly, "and fancying fearful things, as old men do. Some time ago my man returned with the welcome news that the strangler was destroyed and that you had disappeared. You have seen Garth?"

"Yes—hired out to run the club after tonight. Did you know Drake was on the way—wired his daughter from Denver?

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Said he might stop off a day or two on the way—Garth is wise to it, and I thought you ought to know."

"That is true," Lu Yan said, after he had listened intently to the very last word. "And no doubt Garth will be here very soon in person." He waved Dan to a seat, and made a careful round of the room before he resumed his talk.

"I have discovered that Motu, my servant, has carried tales to Garth as I have long suspected. After I have caused him to tell me all his guilt I shall discharge him. In the mean time I do not know how much Garth knows of the things that should be kept secret, but I suspect that he has learned that Drake is bringing with him some very valuable jewels."

"The Twins!" Dan let out. "I knew it!" And Lu Yan nodded.

"But I want to know certain other facts concerning Garth—facts on which many lives may depend, or I should not ask you to keep me informed concerning your employer. I do not ask you to betray the man who trusts you——"

"Garth doesn't own me, and he never will," said Dan. "And I don't go to work for him until midnight anyhow. When I do, I'll tell you anything that will help you—you know it!"

"Thank you, my son—you will not regret it." Lu Yan looked at Dan thoughtfully. "There is a tale that I must tell you when the time is propitious." As he was about to speak further there came a padding step in the passage. At the curtain appeared a cued head—not the head of the spy Motu—to say a few clucking syllables.

"Thank you, Yara," said Lu Yan in English, then to Dan: "Garth is on his way, and he will be here in a few moments—to speak of secret matters. It would be dangerous to overhear his talk, if he knew you had overheard—and yet these be matters you would do well to know at once, for your immediate guidance."

Even as Lu Yan hesitated there came sounds of knocking at the door below.

"I can take care of myself—where's the best place?" Dan said quickly.

Lu Yan was already in action—sliding a large screen before a corner alcove.

"Here—and this panel slides if you press the corner thus—giving entrance to the next room, thence to the stairs to the rear basement."

Lu Yan had given the rapid directions and was seated on the low couch when Garth entered puffing with haste. His dark face was sullen and aggressive as he spoke without any pretense—

"Where is that —— Wheeler—has he been here?"

"He was here two hours ago." Lu Yan bowed courteously. "He left to return to the hotel soon after, but he may have been—detained on the way. The streets are unsafe."

"You know he was—you know he killed my best man, —— him! And now he's trying to double-cross me in this. Listen to me, Lu Yan. You are smooth and you're deep, and Wheeler is a bad man to stir up, but I warn you not to oppose me in this. It is too big, and I am going to put it through if I have to croak all of you, one at a time! Remember—what I set out to do—I always do. Stand from under before it is too late!"

"You speak in parables. To what do you refer? What is the matter that is so vital to you?" Lu Yan asked calmly.

"I will tell you." From under his lowered brows Garth shot a quick glance round the room. "You have got somebody listening—so much the worse for him—later! But now I want to know, first, if Drake is bringing both the diamonds with him?"

"*Both* diamonds?" Lu Yan looked surprized.

"You will pay for this—don't play with me! You know the 'Twins' are two matched stones without equal." Garth was serious and deadly. "You know what has been offered for the pair—what *you* are authorized to pay for them. Is this Prince Iotu a fake or—are you buying for yourself?" With the question he shot his snarling face forward, as if to startle a revelation out of the bland merchant.

"I could not afford to buy them," said Lu Yan, and disregarding the insolent snort that Garth emitted he went on gently—

"And Prince Iotu is my guest at my little house across the bay."

"I never caught you in a lie," Garth scowled, but with suppressed satisfaction. "And I want to know one more thing—straight. Is he—this Prince Iotu—a member of the Inner Circle of the Nameless Order?"

It was as if a bomb of silence had burst in the room! The hush was so deep that Dan heard his heart pound, and even Garth shook his head uneasily.

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"Well! Are you dumb?" he snapped insolently. "Or scared speechless? Or is this a part of the hocus-pocus of *The Order That Is Not?*"

"You persist in your delusion!" Lu Yan shrugged sadly. "I warned you once before——"

"Never mind going through the same formula—I can parrot that—'There is no such order' and so on. And I am doing the warning now. I warn you to stand back—hands off! I am more dangerous than ever—and I am going *into* this order. Absolutely *nothing* shall stop me!"

In the man's voice there was a hollow ring—in his black eyes an insane glitter. Already Dan had caught a sniff of an alcoholic breath and he recalled that, at a certain stage of intoxication, Garth was said to give way to spells of homicidal mania. In one of these, it was said, he had broken the button from his foil in a fencing-bout and killed his own brother. As Dan recalled these stories he had taken from his pocket the gray silk cord—slender but viciously strong—that he had pulled from under the body of the strangler only an hour or so before.

Garth had made a vague threat, and he seldom threatened in vain. Dan decided not to get away through the next room. He had no doubt of his ability to take care of himself, and he had his new Colt in its place.

But what was Garth saying?

"Now—as I told you—it's a bad time of the moon for Dan Wheeler behind the screen! I intended to use him, but he has put his head in the noose. I know he's there, for I can smell him—smelled him when I came in—and my best play is to knife him here and have you hanged for it!"

With a shock it came to Wheeler that this was cold fact. Garth had the organization and influence to do that very thing. Dan's body in Lu Yan's room, and Garth's word, would be enough for a packed jury. Moreover, if Garth were killed in the fight, it was probable that both Dan and the Chinese merchant would hang for it.

All this went through Wheeler's head while Garth was reaching from the wall a long, broad Chinese blade with a chased silver handle. He drew it from its lacquered sheath and felt its keen point with relish.

"Ha! *Now* let's see!"

Before the words were out he darted to the screen, swept it aside with his left hand and followed it with the blade, point first, in a scythe-like sweep that took in all the space behind the screen. The point of the weapon stuck in the wood of the wall-corner with a heavy *chuck!*

BY A mixture of luck and skill Dan had leaped aside with the moving screen, and was almost behind Garth before he could pull the knife from the wood. When the blade came loose at the second jerk Garth wheeled to see Wheeler standing poised, his little rope loose-coiled and ready in one hand. He hesitated, and that moment of indecision was enough for the Fates to change their minds—to switch from tragedy to comedy.

"Behind you!" called the watchful Lu Yan.

The curtain of the doorway of the passage, at Dan's back, suddenly bulged, and Motu's lean yellow hand darted a knife from behind it—straight at Dan's ribs. Swerving aside, Dan caught the wrist in his left hand—with a quick jerk he snatched Motu into the room, done up in the curtain like a cocoon.

Garth made a lunge at the same time—met Motu half way and was knocked flat, rolling to Lu Yan's feet. Pivoting toward the door, Wheeler yanked again—jerked Motu clear of the floor and into the passage, where he kicked the scrambling bundle cleanly to the bottom of the stairs with the one word—

"Git!"

Audibly Motu got. There was a bump that rattled the building—a scratch and scramble—the door slammed—silence!

Dan stepped back into the room, his little coil still in his right hand.

"He left the curtain," he remarked casually, then to Garth: "Have I got to rope you?—You're drunk!"

Garth was picking himself up. He rubbed his head where Motu had butted him, and grinned—for he had a sense of humor—quite frankly.

"No—I have these spells," he mumbled.

"Going to have another?" Dan freed his noose suggestively.

"Not now." Garth actually smiled.

"Then put up that snickersnee and come on—we'll be late for the show," said Dan. "You need a keeper."

Lu Yan looked on in dumb amazement.

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Confucius never wrote anything that applied to such an occasion.

"I need you—that's sure!" said Garth. "Why didn't I meet you before? You're an artist in manhandling—I give you that, Dan Wheeler!"

"I didn't ask for it," said Dan gruffly. "And don't think, just because I don't give you what's coming to you, that you can pull this old stuff again. *I'll* give *you that!*"

"Just a test of your nerve, that's all." Garth waved his hand and tossed the knife on the couch behind him. "Lu Yan, remember what I have told you. Good night. Come on, Wheeler."

It went against the grain to obey the insolent order, but Dan said good night and followed the Boss down the stairs. He wanted to know how Garth would explain or excuse the deliberate attempt to put him out of the way.

But Garth was a man of rare and wonderful insight. He gave another proof of it by his treatment of the topic as they walked through the narrow, dingy streets. He made no attempt to talk until they were on the outskirts of Chinatown, where the streets were sparsely occupied, and then he made no excuses.

"You notice how these Chinks dodge for cover." He waved a hand at a skulking figure boastfully. "They know me!"

"Don't know you well enough, or they'd stick a knife in you," Dan countered grimly. "And I'll give you a pointer—you can't scare me by this insanity dodge, and you don't fool me a minute. I advise you not to have another of your spells around me—Snead had 'em!"

He cut off his speech at the right point. Garth knew how Wheeler had killed "Smiling" Snead. After waiting for this to strike in, Dan added, "Snead was a smiler, too—he had 'spells'—and he had a knife—and *he's* dead!"

"Very clever!" was Garth's airy comment. "But you don't think you can scare *me*—you know better. Just as I know you are not going to quit me cold on account of our ruckus tonight. But since you *will* give what nobody ever takes—advice—I will caution *you!* Forget what you have heard tonight if you want your days to be long in the land!"

"I can't remember all the ballyhoo you spilled, but I don't forget a thing I want to remember. Save your breath!"

They walked for long minutes in silence, Wheeler never once letting Garth get behind him or out of range of the tail of his eye, and at length Garth chuckled in genuine amusement.

"I swear, Wheeler, you are good! I wouldn't have missed this entr'acte even to see Booth meet his father's spirit—I expect the first act is about over by now."

He attempted to put a familiar hand on Dan's shoulder, but Wheeler slipped from under it.

"Keep your flowers and your paws to yourself!" he growled. "I don't like to be touched, by you!"

"I don't care what you like, boy——"

"And quit grinning at me like that." Dan faced him with a cold, level look that wiped off Garth's smile. "There is a limit, and you have got there, right now. You call yourself a mind-reader—do a little reading for your own good!" And this time Garth did take advice. He moved back a step as he said:

"All right—we'll come down to cases, here and now. Are you going on with our contract—going to work for me in good faith—or are you going to take my money and look for the first chance to put a knife in my back, to square accounts?" Garth was now cold and keen.

"Now you're talking!" said Dan carelessly. "Your 'spells' don't scare me, as I told you, and I will work for you for the money I get—each man for himself, and get me if you can! But I told you before and I tell you now—your next 'spell' will be your last! I am not afraid of you a little bit, behind my back—drunk or crazy—and do you——"

There was a moment of silence, and there is no doubt that Garth was stirred by something like admiration, for he spoke with deliberation.

"No flowers this time, but you are too good a man to lose. Just now I need a man like you, and I don't know another. It is a waste of good nerve for us to be watching each other, however, and I'll call a truce with you. I promise to play the game with you on the level, if you will do the same. You know my word is good." He held out his hand.

Dan looked at him eye to eye in the light of a dim street-lamp.

"I know your word is good until you can make more by breaking it," he said without

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heat or emphasis. "I promise to work for you, just as I said I would, from midnight until I give notice. But I give no two weeks' notice in advance—understand that. When I say I quit, I quit! And I don't shake hands."

"Good enough!" Garth nodded. "I know you—you're no quitter."

He turned to walk on, whistling, and as Dan followed he muttered—loud enough to be heard—

"No—but *you* are—that's why!"

CHAPTER IV

THE house was dark and the play in progress as they entered the rear of the large stage-box, and they stole to their chairs unnoticed. Wheeler at once gave his attention to the play with entire enjoyment. He was in the United States once more, and with real folks.

Although he had no snobbishness in his make-up he had taken a liking to his lordship at sight, and Senator Sands was plainly a broad-gage he man. So he missed not a point of the work of the great play as presented by the greatest actor of his age. But the instant the curtain fell he became equally absorbed in the play within the box.

Garth was doing his brilliant best to attract the beautiful girl-widow, but Wheeler—as he would have said—was backing Brendon to win that race. Dan was studying every shade of expression on the face of the Boss and, at the same time, he was conscious that the Senator was studying him.

Sands was a big man and looked it. His large, clean-cut features were of the leonine type. He had been anxiously preoccupied at first, but as he watched Wheeler's cameo-clear profile—and watched Wheeler watching Garth—his expression lost its worriment and became more interested. He listened keenly to hear his every word.

Lina Drake turned her lovely face, in the midst of a lively discussion, in search of Dan.

"Give us your opinion, Dan Wheeler—was *Hamlet* insane?"

"Sure!" Dan flushed as usual when she spoke to him suddenly, but answered promptly, "Certainly—by spells!" And as he met Garth's irritating smile he added—

"Like lots of 'em!"

"I believe that is a correct diagnosis," the Senator said gravely. "It is agreed that many of us are insane at times, and even maniacs have their sane moments. There is no hard-and-fast line drawn between us."

The Senator more than once recalled Dan's look at Garth and his answer to the question, after the curtain had gone up again, and he stroked his long, clean-shaven upper lip as he did when pleased or thoughtful.

The small and select hop after the theater-supper was given in the up-stairs ladies' parlor of the hotel, and here the Senator soon sought Wheeler out. He found him looking on from the hallway.

"I see you are not dancing, Mr. Wheeler. Will you smoke a cigar down in the lobby?"

"Thank you sir!" Dan colored becomingly. "I don't use 'em—but I like the smell. I'd rather smell 'em than—dance!" And he turned toward the stair-head by the side of the big man.

He was aware of the honor done him, and he saw Garth hurry to head them off.

"Did you want me Senator?" with the most respectful solicitude.

"Not now—you are enjoying yourself."

The tone was bland, but Garth's face went dark and ugly for one instant before he could force a playful smile.

"Don't corrupt my new manager!" He waved a graceful hand at Dan.

"Not beyond your power to save—at any rate," Sands responded dryly.

In the broad down-stairs lobby, deserted at this hour of the night, the Senator led the way to a circular couch in the center where one could see in all directions. Here he took an armchair facing Dan.

"So you are to run the Cascade for Garth?" he began, leaning forward intently. The Senator chewed as well as smoked his cigar—with large, strong teeth and firm lips.

"From twelve o'clock until I give notice I quit," Dan specified. "Yes, sir."

"You are young for such a tough job. The honor is naturally pleasing to you?"

Dan's lips twitched as he answered modestly—

"I'll try to—keep my shirt on."

"O-*ho!*" After the one full-chest note with head thrown back, Sands resumed his dignified, impressive manner. He leaned farther forward.

"You have, I understand, downed three or four of the most dangerous men in this

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country—all of them crooks—mankillers. May I ask what *is* your chosen work—or profession?"

Dan colored, then turned slightly pale, but his long, level eyes met Sands' gray, keen gaze fairly.

"That, as much as anything. But I didn't choose it."

"Hm-m-m!"

Sands replaced his cigar and puffed twice, ruminating, then went on:

"I'm not critical, understand, nor simply curious. Frankly I have taken a liking to you at sight, and I wish you'd tell me what —exactly—you mean by that. You didn't choose? What forced you to do it?"

Dan was not used to self-analysis. He stopped to think.

"Myself, I guess," he answered simply. "When I run against a right bad one—bad enough for everybody—I can't seem to stop until I—until I get the cuss!" And the thin, sensitive lips curled up a bit at the corners.

The Senator's gray eyes warmed with a responsive twinkle. He turned them on his cigar, which he took out to hold over a cuspidor—kept them fixed on the ash as he knocked it off with a little finger. Then he swept a look round the empty lobby.

"Dan Wheeler, I have information about you and your record that might surprize you. My own eyes tell me still more, and I believe you are to be trusted—that you can use your head and keep your mouth shut."

"I can keep my mouth shut."

The Senator nodded shortly, then went on.

"This Cascade Club, as you know, has got to be little more than a gambling-joint—illegal, of course. But, so long as it is run decently, nobody will object to it. It is a gambling age—this is a gambling city—and you will meet some of our best men in your place. I may visit it myself. But—" he dropped his voice a bit—"it is Garth I want to speak to you about."

After another ruminative pause the Senator asked—

"Just what did you mean when you said that *Hamlet* was insane 'like lots of 'em'? "

"I said he had crazy spells," Dan corrected.

"Well?"

"That goes for Garth, too!"

"That, probably, is true." Sands nodded. "But don't let it go at that—don't let it throw you off your guard! I have known many dangerous men in my time—men hard to solve—but never so dangerous and so baffling a man as this same Garth. He has won out so far—actually compelled the support and backing of certain men, including myself, by sheer ability and clear-sightedness. He has done many things—horrible things—and escaped the consequences only by a combination of force and an insight into men and affairs that amounts almost to clairvoyance. He may be insane —but look out for him!"

"Sure! I've seen 'em before—they're the worst kind," Dan assented.

"One other thing!" Sands spoke still lower. "He has about reached the end of his rope, and I believe he realizes it—I believe he is preparing to seek other fields for his talents."

"That's easy too," said Dan. "It sticks out, plain as a pikestaff."

"Very well then!" Sands threw himself back in relaxed enjoyment of his cigar. "I shall sleep better tonight, now I know you are on that job. When you get in a tight place, you know where to come!"

He smiled as he regarded Wheeler, in the obvious confidence of youth—so sure of himself and of the world. But he got an immediate surprize.

"I shouldn't be so sure if I were you!" Dan spoke like an echo of the other's thought. "I don't want to disturb your sleep, but—" Dan turned his head to look at the big tall clock. "I'm not Garth's hired man for fifteen minutes yet."

"Wha-what's that?" Sands sat up and blinked.

"I told Garth I would go to work at twelve, and reserved the right to quit without notice in advance just because I saw he might jump the track at any time. If he got too raw I'd have to stop him."

"Yes, of course—but I warned you he was not a man to be lightly opposed or antagonized."

"Antagonized?" Dan sniffed. "I didn't say antagonize—I said *stop!* Snead was a bad man to oppose—but I stopped him—had to!"

"Certainly—of course," the Senator nodded gravely; "but Garth's craving for power has restrained him in the past. He could

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go only so far without losing *all* support."

"But suppose he got a notion he could conquer the world, and the way to do it was to kill off the whole bunch—or 'most all of them?" Dan stopped to make his meaning clear. "I mean if he got the idea—delusion—that there was a certain *something* that would put him in command of everybody and everything—but that he had got to kill a lot of folks to get that *something*—then his ambition and his thirst for killing would pull the same way—what then?"

Sands stared as if at a ghost, and presently whispered—

"You mean?"

"What if I had heard Garth raving about that very *something*, and it wasn't the first time?"

"How did— What did he call *it?*" Sands asked quickly.

"He called it The Nameless Order—said nobody would——"

"Sh-h!"

A heavy hand was clapped on Dan's knee, and he paused to see the Senator turn his head for a complete survey of the lobby before he spoke.

"Where was this?"

"At Lu Yan's."

"You heard it?" still in a whisper.

"Yes—he hollered loud enough for everybody——"

"Garth did, you mean?"

"Certainly."

"Well—he has done it now!" Sands leaned back in his chair, but he did not seem depressed by the news, and he went on with renewed animation: "You did well to tell me of this, but don't speak of it again to anybody—even to Garth—don't think of it if you can help it. It will do no good and may do a lot of harm. Tell me if you hear more of the same sort. Here comes Garth to tell me my Boss wants me!"

The ball broke up at midnight, for it was an old tradition of the house which Garth scrupulously observed, and after the Senator had gone Dan sat alone in the lobby thinking of the curious behavior of Lu Yan and of Senator Sands—when they had heard mention of the Nameless Order.

As he listened to the distant rumbling of carriages and good-night calls outside, the tall Heidelberg clock against the wall began its rich cathedral chime for midnight.

CHAPTER V

"YOU are my man now, remember." Garth met Wheeler at the foot of the stairs. "I want a chance to sleep—will you go out back and look around?"

He made his first order a mild question. "Out back" was an expression used in the hotel to refer to the passage leading to the gambling-rooms at the club.

Brendon was on the stairs, coming to look for Dan also. He was too much in love to be sleepy so soon.

"May I come along and see you take possession?" he asked; and as they made their way along the dimly lighted passage he talked cheerfully. "But things do move in California! By Jove! A few hours ago we were both strapped and almost friendless—now you are running the Cascade Club and we are being fêted by the aristocracy! Do you feel at all weak-kneed about your job?"

"It's no new thing for me," said Dan. "I rolled the wheel here a few weeks once before—when Garth's father ran it. It was really rough in those days. But don't talk about things moving—yet! I have a full-sized hunch they have just got started—I'm looking for action now 'most any old time."

"I'd like to know what you call action, by Jove!" Brendon was saying as they entered the roulette-room.

The wheel was at its busiest, and the room was quietly humming with talk. Noiseless waiters distributed drinks from the large buffets—the air was blue with cigar-smoke. Above the drone of voices and the whirr of the rolling ball rose the resonant voice of Oily Perkins calling the winning number:

"Fourteen—even—under—and black!—*Quatorze*—pair—*manque—et noir!*"

"Perk is showing off his French," commented Dan. "Not three in the room understand it, but Perk likes to feel Monte-Carlo-ish. He's a regular devil—that Perkins!"

Brendon was noting with relish the nudges and whispers as Dan made his way through the pack round the table to the side of Perkins' throne.

"How's she rolling, Perk?" he murmured in the fat man's ear. "Anybody howling for our gore?"

Perkins answered parenthetically:

"(Fairish—into four figures already.)

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Get 'em *down*, gentlemen—she rolls again! —(One guy wanted the roof off—he's stickin' round somewhere. Want to roll a spell and ginger 'em up? I'm bleary-eyed.)"

Wheeler summoned Brendon to his side with a jerk of his head.

"Like to roll a while?"

"I'd like it top-hole, but I'm not sure I could do the paying-off," said his lordship eagerly.

"Brenner will do that. You take the rake, Brenner, and let Brendon roll. Gentlemen, Lord Percy Brendon of Brendon Court will play with you a while, by special request of the new management!"

Dan saw that the crowd was pleased and interested, before he tried to lead Perkins out of the room and across the hall to Garth's private office. And even then he was waylaid by the guy who wanted the roof—*i. e.*, the limit—off.

He was a bronzed youth with clear blue eyes and a pleasant voice:

"Is this Mr. Wheeler—Dan Wheeler? I did want to get a few licks for real money —when you coming back?" he asked softly.

"His lordship will oblige you. Brendon, this gentleman wants our hide and we aim to please—no limit on any bets!"

"Raw-*ther!*" His lordship gave the guy who craved action his sweetest smile and blush. "The pleasure is mine, really!"

"I never was skinned by a real lord." The tanned youth grinned as he pulled his roll—everybody pleased; and Wheeler made his escape with Perkins to the little office.

"Where is the old man's getaway-hole?" was Dan's first question as he closed the door behind them.

"Over the mantel—this end, behind George," Perkins directed; and as Dan got on a chair to open it he went on, "Press on the top and pull on the bottom of the frame."

The picture of Washington crossing the Delaware swung up with the panel to which it was fastened, disclosing a hole large enough for a slim man.

"Smells like it was never opened." Dan had his head inside. "And you say Garth doesn't know about it. How's that?"

"His father meant the older brother to have the property—the one this lad killed—and nobody had ever told him, 'cause they didn't know. Garth is so dead sure of his cinch he never asked for it even—but I'm about to remark he's getting so——"

Perkins stopped, because Dan had crawled out of sight.

Presently he came back, covered with dust, and while Perkins was brushing him down there were sounds of hurried steps, and Garth opened the door with his pass-key. He was so excited that he did not notice the guilty flush on the fat man's face.

"Here's —— to pay, Wheeler! Come in, Senator—run along, Perk—where is that Britisher?"

"Perkins, will you ask his lordship to step into my office?" Dan said with cool dignity. "Have this chair, Senator—welcome to my club! Now what are *you* hollering about?" he snapped at Garth.

At this cavalier treatment Garth had to grit his teeth, and the Senator stroked his upper lip. But the Boss kept his control and came to the point.

"Drake has been robbed! Train held up somewhere beyond Truckee. When it went on, Drake was not on it—neither was the bag he carried."

"What do you expect me to do about it?" asked Dan, frowning.

"You and I are going after him," Garth snapped.

"I wouldn't bet on it," said Dan. "How do you know he was robbed? And where did it happen?"

"Don't know—only it was beyond—Say!" Garth turned to the Senator. "It couldn't have been far from that ranch of yours—near Bridge Cañon Mines. Do you know anything more about this?"

Garth was sore under the irritation of Dan's manner, and he was careless about changing his tone when he altered the direction of his discourse.

"If you mean to imply that I am concealing anything," the Senator said ominously, "let me tell you I don't like your insolent question or your offensive manner."

"I apologize— Oh— I apologize!" blurted Garth, but this is a big thing and nobody knows anything——"

"How do you know the train was held up —or that Drake was missing afterward then?" Wheeler rapped out sharply. "Who sent you the wire?"

"I had a man on the train," Garth admitted, coloring. "He sent the wire from Truckee. I knew Drake carried valuable—

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papers, and that he was so fearless in such matters——"

"And with good reason—Drake can take care of himself!" The Senator was plainly getting fed up with Garth. "What else was Drake carrying—that you should have a spy shadowing him?"

"Valuables, I tell you," Garth snapped. "Some of us will be ruined if he has been robbed." The last he addressed to Brendon, who had just appeared in the doorway and repeated for his benefit. "Drake has been robbed or kidnaped!"

"Does she—his daughter know it?" was Brendon's first question.

"I will tell her in the morning," said the Senator. "Drake may have dropped off and gone to look over the mine—or he may have known he was being shadowed—I think you will find he has taken care of himself."

"Miss Lina has spoken of a man named Dalton?" Brendon suggested. "Was that the name?"

"That's it!" The Senator slapped his leg. "I will bet you a doughnut he's gone to visit Dalton on the ranch—they seemed to hit it off first-rate last Summer. He's half-owner with me and runs the ranch," he explained to Brendon and Wheeler.

"The train leaves in less than an hour—if we're going," Dan said suggestively. Action was always attractive, and he looked at Brendon.

Garth was on the war-path immediately.

"That's the ticket! Get ready, Wheeler—you and I are going to get him. Can you sit up in the middle of a horse? You'll have to, if you follow me." He seemed to be trying to start in three directions at once.

"I punched cattle a while," said Dan gruffly, adding in a mutter, "I can make your tongue hang out a mile."

"I say," Brendon said eagerly, "let me come along—I want to most awfully—I can ride, and if I cahn't stick it you chaps can jolly well let me stop where I funk it, you know!"

"You'd slow us up," Garth protested. "We may have to chase down into the desert-country if he's kidnaped."

"But I served the Widow in India a year," Brendon pleaded. "V. C. and all that sort of thing—I——"

"He goes or I stay!" Dan announced abruptly. "Get action! Can we get horses at your ranch?" he asked Sands.

"Yes—I'll wire Dalton—he'll outfit you, all but clothes."

"Come on, Brendon—I've got flannel shirts." Dan started, and called back to Garth, "Meet you at the two-ten train."

"This is the life!" Brendon pulled alongside Dan as they ran up the stairs to their rooms. "Awfully good of you to take me. Garth seems almost human at times—don't you know."

"Yes. I *don't* know," dryly. "I don't trust him out of sight and he returns it—that's why he wants me along. Unless he knows a deep hole he wants to drop me in and lose me," he added carelessly.

They threw clothes right and left like boys just let out of school for a holiday home.

"By Jove! It will feel good to get a horse under me."

Brendon was getting into a pair of real riding-breeches—English.

"Wait until the second night—you'll sleep on your face," said Dan. "If you sleep at—— Wow! Help!" He dodged and threw up an elbow as he saw Brendon's legs. "Going to wear those things?"

"They're the correct thing to ride in."

"To get shot in, you mean. It's plain suicide to wear 'em into the cow-country. But you're a picture! A pink coat and an umbrella-handle is all you need to holler 'Yoicks'. Did anybody ever say 'Yoicks' out of a book?"

"Can't say, really. But they're better than they look—and wait until we see that long-haired Johnny on a horse—Garth!" Brendon said with a smile. "I am looking forward to it."

"It's a case of horse and horse—he'll enjoy those pants. But don't fool yourself! He's an ex-champion sure-shot and buckaroo—a rider like they don't have in England, or anywhere but in Russia—and he will have on a Stetson that cost a cool few hundred or so. Garth will be there with the scenery—don't doubt it!"

He was. In blue flannel shirt and red silk neckerchief, fringed chaps and high-heeled boots, Garth was the last word in cowboy style. And it was becoming to his dark, round face with its flashing black eye—and long hair curling almost to his collar.

He looked a dashing, beardless Buffalo Bill. Brendon had no remarks to offer when they met at the station, and Garth did not even look at the riding-breeches.

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He was too keenly interested in the hunt for Drake and his hand-bag.

"Better get what sleep you can." he charged Wheeler as they climbed aboard the Pullman. "No telling how far we may have to chase a band of train-robbers. And we are going to get that stuff Drake carried if we go to the Mexican border—no matter what it costs in time and money."

Dan followed in silence into the car, but Garth motioned them both into the smoking-room.

"I want you two boys to understand that this is no pleasure-jaunt. We are not the only men who want what's in that bag." He lowered his voice. "But I—we are going to bring it back with us or not come back—some of us may *not* come back. That's what I want you to know at the start."

"Suits me," said Dan. "You got one section? Odd-or-even to see who sleeps up-stairs."

Garth nodded with a satisfied smile that did not fade even when the upper berth fell to him as odd man. The three turned in at once and slept until mid-forenoon.

GARTH'S good humor stayed with him overnight and he made himself agreeable to the Englishman in the morning, while Dan dropped into one of his silent, brooding moods. At such times it was almost impossible to get a word out of him, and the look in his gray-green eyes kept most people from trying.

Brendon, now that he had time to do some thinking, began to look a bit worried and depressed. Garth stopped pointing out to him the features of the mountains about them.

"I know what you're thinking," he said with sober sympathy. "If Drake is killed or his papers destroyed, it leaves you in a bad fix. But I wouldn't worry if I were you. I know that's easy to say, but I'm not just talking mush."

He spoke hurriedly as he saw Dan's moody eyes swing from the window to him.

"Wheeler can tell you I am a man of my word, and can bear witness when I tell you that, even if Drake and his deeds are missing, I will see that you and his girl—Miss Lina—don't lose by it. You will have your mine just the same—and I own all the adjoining claims."

"Which are worthless." It was Dan's first hoarse remark. Garth smiled.

"Perhaps. But the value of the Drake & Brendon property depends on my claims—however worthless mine may be. Now here's the point. I want something else that Drake carries—or had with him when he started—some jewels, we'll say. I want them so much that if Drake will sell them to me for a fair price, I will throw in all my Bridge Cañon mining properties, *for nothing!*

"I will tell you frankly that I am telling you this because I want you to use your influence with your partner to get him to sell me the jewels. You would then have no trouble selling your mine and cleaning up a lot of money—enough to make you a rich man. You know best what that would mean to you."

Garth waited for it to sink in, which it did quickly. Brendon turned white.

"It would mean everything—just everything," he said huskily, "to many people. I would want nothing more. But why should Mr. Drake refuse to sell, for a fair price?"

"That's his affair," Garth said crisply.

"It's an old skin game," Dan spoke again gruffly. "To get good money for something worthless—throw in a worthless premium. But here you want jewels—What do you mean by a fair price?" He turned on Garth suddenly.

"I will tell you." Garth leaned forward impressively. "I will leave that to Drake—or I will pay him more than he has already *agreed to sell for* to another party."

He leaned back to look from one to the other of the two men facing him. After a few moments he said:

"You two think it over—talk it over—take your time. It will be two hours before we get to Bridge Cañon Station."

He left them and went to the smoking-compartment. There was little talking done, and that was done by Brendon.

"*Is* Garth's word good?" A nod.

"He means his offer in good faith?" Another.

"And Drake and I could get a big price if we had Garth's claims?" A third nod. Brendon got excited.

"Will Drake sell the jewels?" Dan shook his head. Brendon's face paled and lengthened perceptibly. After a long pause he asked desperately—

"What *does* it all mean?"

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Dan laid a hand lightly on Brendon's knee. It was the first time he had ever shown any sign of sympathetic feeling. He said softly—

"Drake knows—leave it to him!"

And it was so evident that further questions would be useless that the Englishman had to do the rest of his thinking without outside aid.

The train was laboring up the stiff grade, and Brendon turned his moody gaze to the window. Huge snow-capped peaks, so far and cold that they seemed unreal, marched majestically abreast the rumbling train while the wild rocky middle-ground swung past between—revolving round the distant mountains.

For an hour not a sign of a human being or the first evidence of man's handiwork passed that window. Never before had the Englishman felt the force and cruelty of the "boundless wilderness" so heavy upon him. It was a country to make men strong and hard—inhuman—they had to be to survive. Some time later he fell asleep and dreamed he was in the garden at home —telling the gardener——

"Bridge Cañon Station. Come on!"

Dan Wheeler was shaking his shoulder gently, and for a moment Brendon felt as if there were something comforting—almost human—in his touch and tone.

They got out on a sandy wind-swept plateau. It was cold at this high level—cold and drearily lonely—nothing in sight but four rough board shacks and a mesquite corral.

Two lank men stood looking at them—one holding a lank mail-sack—and chewing solemnly. The one with the mail-sack started to drag it into one of the shacks that bore the sign — POSTOFIS — the S turned the wrong way.

"Any of the men from Senator Sands' place waiting for us?" Garth called at the other individual as if he were deaf.

The man stopped dragging the bag, surveyed the arrivals again and then looked at the other native. Both spat in unison—copiously.

"What th' ——! I guess you got off the wrong place."

The man with the bag was dragging it off again when the other one was seized of an idea.

"Look, Bill! Who sent that tel-e-*gram* to John Dalton?"

While Bill was arranging his thoughts—and his cud—for an answer, Dan chipped in—

"That's the man we want—Dalton—where is he?"

After another pause for due deliberation Bill came to the front with:

"Lookin' f'r John Dalton? Why didn't y' say so? Mebbe on's way here—mebbe not—some days he gits his mail. Looky here! If you're goin' to Dalton's ranch y' might's well take along this yere tel-e-gram—come some time this mornin'. You wait here and I'll git it for ye."

He disappeared inside with the bag.

"Was the train hold-up near here?" Garth questioned the remaining native. The man edged nearer the post-office and looked uneasily for Bill to come to his relief. Bill appeared with Senator Sands' telegram asking Dalton to meet his friends at the station. While Garth read it Dan repeated the question to Bill.

"What hold-up?" Bill asked almost at once.

"Wasn't the west-bound express held up near here?"

"Not's fur's I know—I didn't stop 'em to ask."

Bill was warming up—he now showed signs of an impending snicker when Garth looked up suddenly to ask—

"Why didn't you deliver this telegram?" He snapped out the question.

"None of your —— business!" snapped Bill as promptly.

It was the most active cerebration Bill had displayed, and he made his exit to heighten the effect. He went inside without stopping to spit. He was postmaster, station-agent, storekeeper and telegrapher. Also he was on his native heath, and therefore "naterally peart and spry."

"How far is it to Dalton's ranch?" Garth tried No. 2.

"Eight-nine mile I reckon."

"Any place to stay here until Dalton comes?"

"Mebbe Bill can put ye up." Moving enough to lean against the post of the open door of the shack. "Bill—man wants to know if y'll put 'm up f'r the night." He called within.

"Can mebbe, but I won't!" came out of the darkness.

The sun was drooping behind the high peaks at their backs. Dan had been

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stamping his feet to keep them warm, and he looked at Garth's hopeless face with a twitch of his thin lips. He faced the man at the door.

"Are there three horses here that we could hire?" he asked evenly.

"N-n-no—I don't guess there's *three*—you could *hire*."

"Or buy?" Dan suggested. The man still shook his head.

"Now see here, neighbor," said Dan cozily. "Let's see—what's the name?"

"Call it Jake." Jake grinned responsive.

"Now, Jake, here's how it is." Dan got Jake's eye and held it. "We are going to John Dalton's ranch—on those three horses—or just naturally wipe this city off the map. We'd rather not have any bother, and we'll pay what's right—buy or hire. Now what's the matter with that third horse?"

In the dusk Dan's level eyes seemed to emit a green flare. As he came nearer, holding the native eye-to-eye, Jake made a feeble motion toward his hip.

"Don't bother! One is enough, and I can get mine quicker!" Jake's popping left eye was looking down the barrel of Dan's Colt. "So don't make any sudden move toward your iron again—just tell us about the cayuse!"

"There's two ye can hire—mine and Bill's." Jake slowly began to grin as Dan's lightning draw soaked into his admiring consciousness. "And there's Jonah!" he added climactically.

"What's Jonah?" Dan prompted cheerfully. "Keep going and you'll come to life yet!"

"He's a hammer-headed watch-eyed buckin' fool that ain't never had a strap on him but once." Jake was coming from behind. "I got him in a trade and got skinned. I'll sell him for forty dollars—in the corral!"

"Lead me to him," said Dan.

JAKE led the party around behind the shacks to the corral, and it was swelled by Bill and another native—all interest and tobacco-juice. The corral was circular and fairly strong. There were only the three animals in it, and it was not necessary to point out Jonah.

He fitted his description like his skin—which was roan. He was ewe-necked, and he returned their questioning gaze with a look of reproach that came from one brown eye and one white one; it was that sad, meek look seen only in the eye of a right bad Western cow-pony. He seemed to single out Dan from the assemblage as the only one worthy of his steel—they were composed of steel springs, dynamite and devilment.

"Including saddle and bridle?" Dan was the first to speak.

"Y-yes—if you can ride him." Hand over mouth.

"You sold your hoss. Hog-tie and saddle him!"

Terms were soon made for the use of the other two—which were to be returned the next day. These two nags were roped and saddled after some biting and kicking. Then Jake insisted on cash in hand before any other movements whatever.

"I don't know where you'll be—once you git on Jonah," was his only argument.

Dan paid up without demur on condition that Jonah was to be delivered prone on his side—saddled, bridled and hog-tied—so that he could get astride him once at least.

After several attempts, a lucky cast of Bill's rope brought Jonah to earth grunting and wild-eyed. He was quickly hog-tied—not so quickly cinched, and the bits pried between his wicked teeth.

As Dan approached his spinal aspect Jonah had his head turned up and twisted, so as to give him a red-eyed glare.

"Watch out!" Garth called. "He means killing—I've seen 'em before. Don't let him fall on you."

"He's bashful—embarrassed," said Dan. "Sit on his head!" And as he cautiously gathered the reins and put one leg over Jonah's barrel he continued his mild comments. "Naturally a bit nervous before an audience—just stage-fright. There— Get off his head— Let him go!"

Ropes off his feet and head free, Jonah grunted and got up.

Dan was on him—more or less. He had one foot in the stirrup—a box-stirrup that will not drag a man to rags of meat—the other thigh across the saddle with the spur hitched in the webbing cinch, and a firm hand gripping pommel and cantle. It was a position neither graceful nor according to Hoyle, but it was a hold shown him by a professional buster and it had advantages.

Jonah stood rolling his red eyes—and shivered.

"Got a chill," said Dan. "Going to get feverish. Your move, Jonah!"

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And with his soft hat he flapped the rigid brute's ears, as he had seen expert busters do to get action.

He got it. Jonah made his first ascension. Dan made sure of his support on one thigh—the one over the saddle—and the foot in the stirrup, so he not only stayed on but did not have his back broken when Jonah landed stiff-legged and bounced.

That was the beauty of that unorthodox method. Although it did not accord with cowboy tradition, Dan had no notion of being racked until he bled from nose, mouth, eyes and ears as he would surely be if he were to "ride him" sitting squarely in true buster-fashion.

Jonah had only started. He had a long program of tricks, and he went through the whole list with earnestness and enthusiasm —making up some out of his own vicious head as he went along.

He bucked straight, sidewise and aslant, at all intermediate angles—he reared and butted backward hammer-wise, kicked and bit standing on his forefeet, alternated and repeated—he turned forward-and-back flip-flaps and somersaults and did a twister combination.

The last was something fancy and done with extra-special finish. Dan found himself at the end of it on the hard sandy earth with head swimming and a sulfurous taste in his mouth. As he picked himself up he spat out a mouthful of sand and remarked:

"That is an able-bodied horse! We are going to enjoy each other—rope him again!"

"You pulled leather," stated the former owner as he spat tobacco-juice.

"I'd pull horse-hide—pull his hide off if I could get hold," Dan responded. "Now, Jonah, let's try another whirl."

Whirl was the word. Jonah waltzed sidewise at halter-length until they had to rope a foot and throw him again before Dan could get a hand on the saddle.

As soon as Dan was aboard, Jonah stopped joking and went to work seriously—without warning he hurled himself viciously on the ground in a well-timed attempt to crush Dan to a jelly. Dan got from under with nothing to spare, and managed to keep topside while Jonah got up and repeated—the third time. Next he rushed at the log wall in an effort to crush his rider's leg. Dan shifted his hold close to the bits and swung sidewise, full-weight on the reins.

Jonah accepted the suggestion by throwing a cornerwise somersault and Dan was hurled against the wall. He bounced up—fell over Jonah—but rolled atop him as he got up; so much to Jonah's surprize that he began his tricks all over at the beginning while he was collecting his wits. He did not omit a single evolution, and to show it was no fluke he did it again.

"He's a proper devil—there is no end to this," shouted Garth. "He will kill you or fight all night. Shoot the —— and we will ride-and-tie to the ranch."

"No—oh, no!" Dan panted as he came round the corral. "I'm just getting interested. He's—'most—ready to bolt. Let down—the bars."

Jonah was sunfishing across the corral, jolting the words out of Dan, and he did not wait for half the bars to drop. He cleared the lower three like a bird and started for Mexico.

"He didn't sit him square—but he's welcome," was Jake's comment as he climbed to the top of the corral to sit down and wait for the wanderer's return.

"I've about half a mind to shoot you, you red-necked yap!"

Garth was really angry, and when Dan came back—Jonah going on a long, effortless lope that covered ground surprizingly—Garth called:

"Good work, Dan! You've got a real horse."

"Which way to Dalton's?" shouted Dan. "Don't stop him now!" and he swung Jonah up the trail indicated by Bill; Garth and Brendon following.

"I have seen some real bronco-busting anyhow!" Brendon exulted when he succeeded in pulling abreast of Wheeler.

"That wasn't the real thing," said Dan scornfully. "A real buster would sit him square and wear him out in half the time. I was just sticking around until he got over his shyness. Jonah's naturally retiring and reserved—hey, old boy?"

As he patted the hard muscular neck Jonah tried to smash his face once more with the top of his hammer-head—hence the name. Dan met him with a fist between the ears, and as Jonah staggered drunkenly he went on:

"He won't try that more than three times more—he's all right now until next time. Jonah is a real kind horse when you get to know him."

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"My word!" Brendon breathed. "I call him a dangerous brute."

"Some folks say almost the same about me," said Dan soberly.

Brendon watched his companion with growing perplexity. There were times when he felt toward Wheeler a repulsion that was almost fear. Here was a youth of about his own age who, nevertheless, was always just out of his reach and beyond his understanding. No sooner had he begun to feel that he was in sympathy with him than the man would do something that seemed more or less than human.

This ghastly struggle with the unbroken cow-pony—carried out without bravado or flourish but with a grim, deadly determination until one was tired, even a bit disgusted, with the senseless persistence of the contest—finished without sensible elation or any other human emotion—left an impression upon the sensitive Englishman almost as unpleasant in its way as the wringing of the neck of the strangler in the dark alley.

And to think that that horrible thing had happened only the night before! It seemed weeks. And it was one more proof of the power of the personality of this strange man riding beside him in silence.

"Can't figure it out?" Wheeler suddenly startled him. "Any more than croaking the strangler in the alley. Well, it's easy——"

Dan made sure Garth was not within hearing. "You remember—I told Lu Yan—I had to show Garth something. Well, I did. Now I have showed him something else—see? You don't think I do such things for fun?"

He spurred ahead without waiting for an answer, and thereafter rode in advance, sunk in the same mood of silent aloofness that had held him all the morning. Long after that evening Brendon was to recall the hoarsely whispered words with a thrill of—something that was partly superstitious fear, partly wondering admiration.

For two long hours they rode in the slowly gathering dusk. Garth all the time was becoming more petulantly uneasy.

"You don't know whether we're on the right trail or not," he called to Dan, who still rode ahead. "You went off at half-cock, without waiting for directions."

Dan never even turned his head, but silently reined Jonah aside and let Garth ride ahead.

The sunset colors had flared and faded behind them, and in the growing dark the trail was more difficult to see and to follow. The way became more steep and rocky, swung to the south among wilder foot-hills. Garth continually fretted and bent low in the saddle to peer at the faintly marked tracks of horses' hoofs where the sand had not blown over them.

Soon he could only let his horse pick his way alone, reins lying on his neck, only cursing when he stopped to graze. Two or three times he called back—

"Think we're on the right trail?"

Since Brendon could not let the silence weigh on his chest, he would answer—

"Can't say, really."

"This is the most entertaining party I ever was at!" Garth commented. "I like a man who can keep up the spirit of a crowd in difficulties."

And from time to time he renewed his good-naturedly sarcastic remarks until Brendon actually began to like the man. He could not be an utter monster, and he was a superb horseman, really.

Finally Garth pulled up and exploded. He cursed the universe in general and by sections with special stress on immediate environment.

"Only for your clown-act in the corral we'd be at Dalton's long ago! We have gone more than ten miles now—we're lost—that red-neck sent us wrong intentionally. I am freezing by inches and nobody will ever find us on this —— mountain."

Dan had pulled aside and a bit ahead. He slowly unsaddled Jonah and picketed him in a grassy hollow. Somewhere in the dark was the sound of rippling water. Brendon started to follow his example.

"But, I say, Dan—I have no rope." He spoke with diffidence, half-fearing Wheeler would not speak to him.

"They'll stay with Jonah—turn' em loose."

"What you going to do?" Garth called out. "No grub and no blankets—how the —— we going to camp? I believe you want to delay this hunt any way you can think of. If that's your game I want to tell you you have bit off ——"

"Dry up!" Dan barked. "You are getting on my nerves." And to Brendon, "Come and get dry sticks."

He led the way up the hillside, and when

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they were out of hearing he muttered to Brendon—

"Don't get much—we'll go to the house after Garth has had his fit."

Brendon did not dare to ask a question for fear he would stop all talk; so he merely commented—

"He did rather funk it—what?"

"Every man has his hoodoo. I am scared of high places and deep water, and it's a mean feeling to be scared—takes something out of you."

AROUND the crackling fire, however, Dan appeared to be prepared for all night. He showed Brendon how to scoop a place in the sand for his hips and shoulders, and with feet to the fire to make the most of his little saddle-blanket.

"Use your saddle for a pillow and to keep off the wind—like this. We can take turns keeping the fire," was all the speech he used.

"Well, I swear!" Garth was cheered by the fire, and had followed Brendon's example. "You are some plainsman after all! Have you ever done any lone prospecting in the desert?" And after a moment—

"Who taught you?"

"Cinch Masters," Dan said quickly.

"What's the matter? Burn your boot?" Brendon asked; for Garth's feet had suddenly jerked away from the firelight.

"Pretty close, I guess." Garth examined his boot solicitously. "Too bad about Cinch—being drowned that way! I was out with him—and almost went down——"

"So I hear," Dan interrupted dryly. "Cinch was my friend. *He* was a man."

"Sure! One of the best—broke me all up. I was one of the— What's that?" There was the crack of a twig behind him.

"Why don't you come to supper?" A tall man stepped cautiously into the firelight, both hands conspicuously in view. He scanned the three faces quickly and spoke to Dan.

"I have seen you before, Sled Wheeler. My name is Dalton, and my ranch is the other side of that big rock. Supper is all ready, and one of the men said there was a fire down here."

"Well, I *will* be ——!" Garth jumped up, all volubility and confidence on the instant. "I have read of such things and called them lies. Senator Sands sent you this telegram this morning early, and the fool didn't deliver it. We thought we were lost. You're a —— guide, Wheeler—get the horses!"

Dalton meanwhile was reading the message.

"Get your own horse," said Dan promptly, "and talk like a white man. You were scared white-lipped, and whined like a whipped cur. I heard Dalton's men talking when I stopped. Your horse would have landed you at the ranch in another minute. He knows more than you do."

"That's no joke—and not saying much at that!" Garth admitted, grinning, pleased that Dan broke silence. "I was wondering how long you could stay corked up without blowing up. Welcome to our happy family."

As Dalton led the way around a rocky bluff to the broad, grassy table-land where his ranch-buildings showed their lights, nestled under a hill at the right, Garth came to the business in hand:

"Was there a hold-up near here? Seen anything of Drake? We are on the hunt for him—heard he had been robbed."

"Hold-up? No. Drake pulled the bell-cord at the Divide so he could get off within a mile of the ranch. He's eating his supper by now. And *robbed*—not so you'd notice it! He has not let his grip out of sight for a minute since he came. Who filled you up?"

"Nobody—we're plumb empty!" said Garth cheerfully. "But we're hoping there's enough grub on the ranch. I am tickled to death about Drake—you are an angel visitant all round."

"Let me introduce my friend—Lord Brendon, of London and Sussex," Dan interposed formally.

Dalton looked at him keenly, seeking his face for signs of a joke, then shook hands gravely.

"Glad to know—er—Lord Brendon. We don't see many—many of the British nobility out here. Hope you can stand rough fare."

"I like everything in this big country—the—the folks most of all." Brendon was proud of his American dialect. "They are out of sight!"

"They'll stay there if they see you first," Dan grumbled, "in those pants."

At the first chance Dan muttered aside to Dalton:

"I am working for Garth now—and I

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don't like you a little bit, don't forget that. We are going to have trouble—I shouldn't wonder!"

"Same here." Dalton grinned in the dark. "You annoy me!" Then he said aloud: "Oh, all right. I don't give a hoot whether you do or not—keep your crow-bait. Ridin' Jonah has soured your temper."

He turned to take the horses of the other two and lead them to the corral. Dan followed to look after Jonah himself, while the others went in to supper.

"So you ain't stuck on the Boss of San Francisco?" Dalton commented as they took off and hung up saddles and bridles after letting the nags drink their fill, for they were thoroughly cooled off.

"Not so bad but what I'll recover. Has Drake told you what he's here for?"

"No, but I guessed he would want to go look at his mine at Bridge Cañon. He doesn't talk a whole lot, but he's a white man."

"You're talking. But there's more in it than the mine," Dan said.

"I thought maybe."

"Why?"

"Oh, just little things," Dalton said: "Drake asking all about what men and horses I had—which were to be depended on, and all that. It sticks right out there's something doing, but it's too many for me. One thing I know—if it's a show-down between Drake and this man Garth, I know which I put my money on."

"Sure!" said Dan. "That's why I say we are likely to have trouble—and I thought I'd warn you I am working for Garth. Still, I don't aim to do any heavy slaughter."

"Good! Come on in—we may be missing something."

DRAKE welcomed Wheeler with quiet warmth. They were too sure of each other to make any demonstration, and Garth watched them keenly. Nothing but stock and the weather was talked about the table, and it was not until all the men had gone to the bunk-house—while Dalton was out to look to the stock for the night—that Drake and Garth faced each other across the open fire.

Wheeler and the Englishman looked on with eager interest. Both these men were natural gamblers—men skilled and seasoned in games of chance and danger—and it was plain by this time that they played a game for big stakes. Beside the mine that meant success or ruin to Brendon, the jewels in Drake's bag had some mysterious value to both or they would not all be where they were at that moment. There was no preliminary fencing or sparring for wind.

"So you were not robbed?" Garth began easily.

"No. There is my bag." He looked at the black leather satchel beside his chair. "But I saw your man on the train. I was not sure who sent him, or that there might not be others on my trail, so I got out where I could see on all sides of me."

"Are the Twins there—both of them?" Garth looked at the two younger men—Wheeler's eyes were almost closed. "Wake up, Wheeler! I want you to hear this as a witness."

Drake smiled slightly at Dan.

"I shouldn't want to go as far as that."

"No use trying to throw sand in my eyes," snapped Garth. "I don't want to have trouble, but when I get you in San Francisco I can *make* you tell anything I want to know."

Drake leaned back in his chair.

"You haven't got me there yet. That's the real reason I stopped here."

"You made a good move, I admit," said Garth, "but you are only putting off the final show-down. Now I am going to get those stones, as I have told the boys here, but to save time I will pay extra. I will give you all my claims at Bridge Cañon Mine for the two stones—I've got the transfer papers ready to sign in my pocket right now."

"Your claims are worth nothing." Drake spoke wearily. "And you know it."

"And *you* know I can block the sale of yours as long as I hold them," Garth retorted.

"Perhaps—perhaps not. But it won't go, Garth," he added coolly. "I will tell you what I will do. I will sell you *one* of the stones, now, for the claims."

"No use jockeying!" Garth responded. "Listen! I know what you have been offered for the two. I have got a certified check for that amount, as well as the quit-claim deed of the claims, in my pocket. I will give you the check *and* the claims for both stones—and the Lord have mercy on your soul if you refuse!"

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"That is something like an offer," admitted Drake coolly. "But I want to know what you intend to do with them if I sell. Are you going to hold up Lu Yan, or his principal, for double the price you mention?"

Brendon did not breathe, and Dan still looked through narrowed lids—all the time at Garth.

"That would be telling!" Garth smiled his frankly insolent smile.

"You are not giving away your mining property for nothing," stated Drake, "and the offer sounds too good—you ought to see that. There must be a colored person in the fuel somewhere—so I shall have to sleep on it."

"A-a-ah-hmm!" Wheeler cleared his throat loudly, and both the dealers started. Dan had got up and stretched sleepily, as if about to go to bed.

"See that your quitclaims are all finished and witnessed," Drake resumed. "Dan and his lordship can witness them, and perhaps we can close the deal in the morning. I will admit that I am tempted—we want to realize on those mining properties, Brendon and I, and we have a good offer if our title is clear."

Garth studied the quiet, firm face of his opponent, and was very evidently doing some quick thinking.

"I will give you one thing, Drake; I never knew you to lie, and I will take your word for this. Can you deliver both Twins to me in the morning if you want to?"

"I can."

"Then all I have to do is to see that you don't get kidnaped *again* before morning." Garth smiled broadly.

"I shall be here in the morning—if that's what you mean," said Drake. "What is more," he added as if it were an afterthought, "I want a good guard, or I don't sleep tonight."

Dalton had come in as Drake spoke, and he heard the last statement.

"You can sleep all right, then, Mr. Drake. You remember Koloi, the Ute Indian you saved from the bull? He is still with me, and he was just asking if the Silent Chief wanted a man. He will stand at your bedside all night and never move a muscle or close an eye."

"I want to talk to him." Drake got up.

"Stay here—I'll send him up—he's got a teepee all by himself and he might not know your step." Dalton smiled as he went out.

"I shot a wounded buffalo that was trying to gore and trample him," Drake explained casually, "and they don't forget. He says his life is mine now and means it. Dalton calls him a Ute, but he speaks the Moqui dialect and I know a little Moqui myself."

While they waited for the red man to appear it seemed to Brendon that somehow the air was heavy with impending events, but he concluded that it was one of these frequent premonitions that fail to work—or that he was simply sleepy.

In his native dress and blanket Koloi strode silently to the fireside—a tall, strong specimen of his race with the tranquil, far-looking gaze born of great distances. He greeted the company with raised hand and the invariable—

"How!"

While Drake made quite an oration the red man stood statue-like, his eyes fixed on those of the speaker and following his every least movement. Once Drake laid hand on the black bag and kept it there until he had finished his speech. When Drake stopped talking the Indian said two deep-chested words, stepped forward to kneel before Drake, took Drake's hand and laid it on his own head. Then he arose and with the repetition of the salutation, "How!" he strode out into the night.

"Where has he gone?" Garth asked. "Did you tell him——"

"He is going to keep watch at the window," Drake said, looking at Dalton. "I sleep in here," and he pointed into the adjoining guest-room.

Their host nodded. "You can have one bed, and there's another in there, besides this couch just outside the door. There's a fourth in the room above—you can fix it to suit yourselves."

"That means you, Garth," Drake said carelessly. "Since you're afraid I will escape in the night you can place your guards."

"Let Wheeler sleep in the other bed in your room, then," Garth said with his annoying grin. "I will take the couch at your door—you can't get through the window if you want to."

He seemed well pleased with the arrangement, and as they sleepily pulled off their boots he asked:

"Is this Indian one of the tribe they say

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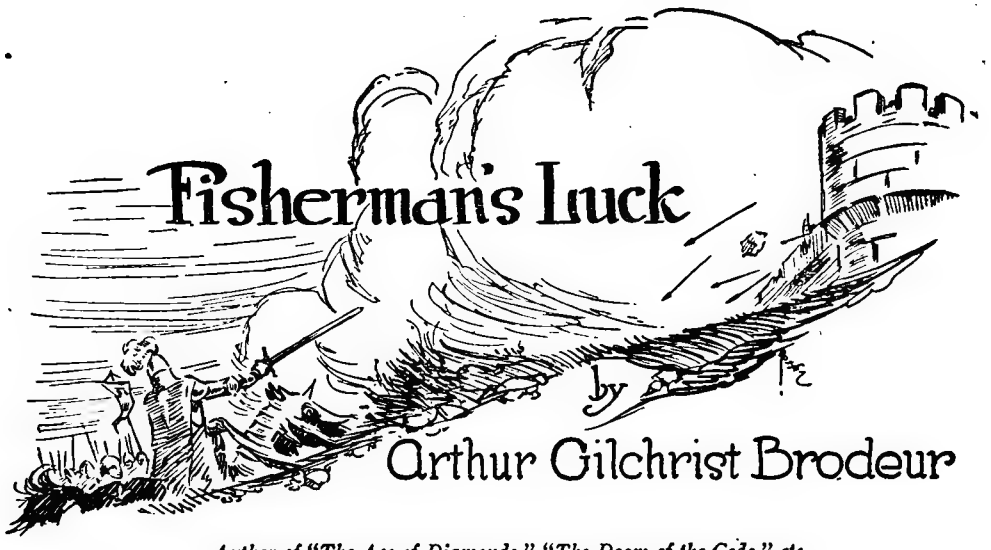
knows the secrets of the gold country—who could find it if they wanted to? I have seen them bring in nuggets myself—to get drunk on—but you can't make 'em tell you where they got 'em." Garth showed intent interest, sleepy as he was.

"I never saw Koloi with any, but Dalton says he is the only man in the country who can get into the Gold Cave in Bridge Cañon—where the story goes the Indians of his tribe used to keep their nuggets. It's a circus stunt to get there—you have to climb the bare cañon-walls with poles wedged across. It takes both muscle and nerve—a special kind of nerve that I haven't got, for it's some hundred feet to the bottom and not a foothold anywhere." Drake finished with a shiver.

"Excuse *me!*" Wheeler spoke up suddenly. "Don't tell me—I want to get some sleep. Jonah did maul me up good and sore—I need a real bed tonight—and I'm going to be one bruised boy in the morning." He got up from his chair stiffly, boots in hand. "Ouch! It's just naturally all over. Lead me to that bed."

It seemed that never had any bed looked or felt so good since he was born. With his last look through the narrow window he saw the black outline of Koloi standing motionless and tireless on his all-night guard.

TO BE CONTINUED



Author of "The Ace of Diamonds," "The Doom of the Gods," etc.

MANY men called Pierre Faidit's success pure luck; but Pierre thought it the finger of Providence. It can not be denied that luck gave him his opportunity, but does not luck do as much for many men? Does not Pierre's history show that he had the brain to use his luck to best advantage, and to turn bad luck to good, as well as good to better?

When he was born, the midwife—who felt obliged to maintain her fame as a wise woman—said to his father, Jehan the Fisherman:

"Never was a finer lad born in the county, good man. Let me tell you something: his luck will be the spear."

Jehan Faidit, being fond of his calling, and loving well the salt reek of the lagoon, thought she meant a fish-spear, and was well pleased. He nodded soberly, as if to say:

"Why not? It is a good trade, and brings food." So he had the boy christened after the great apostle who fished for men; and the parish register of Cap Estang bears, under the year 1119, the name and birth-notice of him who was to be its greatest son.

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IN THE Spring of 1133, when he had just passed his fourteenth birthday, Pierre happened to catch the greatest turbot ever seen on the coast of the Languedoc. This was not the beginning of his luck; for he was blessed already with the healthiest and biggest of bodies, and a handsome, clear-cut face of the Roman type, that a duke's son might have been proud of. Half-grown as he was, his strength already was as that of a young Mars, with muscles that played smoothly under a clear skin.

But it was the turbot that gave his luck a wrestling-hold on the world: for his father Jehan determined that such a prince of fishes must be sent as a gift to their master, the feudal lord of Cap Estang, and of much country besides. This was Roger, Vicomte of Béziers and Carcassonne. Now it chanced that Pierre's turbot reached the Vicomte's table just in time to be served to a greater than he.

Alphonse-Jourdain the Magnificent, Count of Toulouse, whose vassal Roger was, as Pierre was vassal to Roger, rode into Béziers with a strong company of men-at-arms, to pay a visit of friendship and supervision. Roger felt that the turbot was just the delicacy to prove, subtly but clearly, how he appreciated the unexpected honor of the Count's visit.

Alphonse, a stern soldier in time of stress, was in his easier hours a most responsive companion and good fellow. Pleased with the turbot, he declared his intention of conferring his personal thanks on the skilled fisherman who had caught it. It pleased his humor to be thus gracious; moreover, it endeared one to one's subjects.

"But Cap Estang is a filthy hole on a sour-smelling lagoon!" the vicomte protested. "Let me show you Carcassonne first! You have not seen that splendid city since your return from Jerusalem, two months since. Béziers and its country is well enough, but Carcassonne——"

Alphonse of Toulouse shook his head. "Carcassonne will wait; my thanks will not. I must see this Pierre in the morning, before I forget him and his catch."

So the two noblemen rode south the next day, with an escort of six spearmen. It was a sun-drenched morning, with just the hint of a tang in the air—the best that the south can give in weather. This was well for the count's humor. Vicomte Roger also was pleased, for it occurred to him that a master who took such delight in an eight-mile jaunt to a dirty fishing-village would be much impressed with the richness of the land and its prosperity under his vassal's rule. Likewise Alphonse would see Carcassonne last of all—and for the first time in years—and that jewel of Roger's domain would richly crown his guest's entertainment.

As they rode out under the vaulted arch in the strong walls of Béziers, Count Alphonse gazed about him with fierce approval. Already, in his thirtieth year, the most distinguished soldier in France, he liked his vassals to fortify and man their cities well. His bold hawk-features relaxed in a thin smile as the cavalcade clattered over the Pont de l'Orb; the wind blowing over the turreted town brought an acrid smell of wine-lees to his nostrils. Then the guard at the bridge grounded their lances with a brave clang; and high good humor beamed in his snapping gray eyes.

"By St. Guirand!" he swore. "I am glad to see this land in such good hands, Roger! A stout castle, a loyal garrison, and —good wine! Ha! Vineyards yonder, at the foot of the slope!"

"You shall ride through six miles of them," the Vicomte promised; and they did.

Alphonse-Jourdain was still dreaming of good fighting and good wine, when the distant breath of Cap Estang smote his nostrils. The fishing-village huddled on the inward side of a salt lagoon which the river tried in vain to freshen. No sooner did the count sniff the sea than he rose in his stirrups, shouting with delight:

"Salt water! Death of my life! Now for the snarer of our turbot!"

An hour before noon the village was in sight, with the gray glimmer of the lagoon beyond it. Now Alphonse clapped a hand to his nose; for the breath of Cap Estang was very bad at close quarters. The smell of the water was enough; but over it rose the stench of rotting fish, enough to turn even a soldier's stomach. He grimaced and rode on, trying to use his eyes without opening his nostrils.

The horses plodded fetlock-deep in the stinking dust of the village street; the houses that lined both sides and straddled the river were mean little things of ill-laid stone, But beyond, the lagoon lay still and smooth. reflecting the gleam of red and green and blue sails against the sand-dunes that

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divided lagoon from bay; and the sight was richly lovely.

Into the unglazed windows of the nearest houses, the bright sun of the Midi flashed the gleam of mail; and women's heads bobbed out to wonder at the martial sight. A few ragged children ran up, staring. No men were to be seen, for all were out on the lagoon, or the bay beyond, at the day's work.

As Alphonse gazed down the village street to the yellow beach, he laughed suddenly.

"Look there! A race!" he cried. Three boats were pulling swiftly in, one a little in advance of the others.

"A day's catch so soon!" the Count approved. "Your subjects are industrious, Roger."

The vicomte shook his head. "The second and third are empty, my lord; only the first is deep-laden. That is Pierre Faidit's boat; and it is he whom we came to see."

The first boat grounded. Its occupant—a magnificent figure of a lad, with bare, brawny arms and stout legs crusted with salt—leaped out and hauled up his cumbrous craft with one mighty tug. He saw nothing of the horsemen, who had halted under the overhanging eaves of a cottage.

Then, with a swish of water, the other two boats beached by the first, and two sturdy boys sprang from each. Without a sign or a word, the four paused not to draw up their empty skiffs, but hurled themselves on the lad Pierre.

Taken by surprize, Pierre went down, but was up in a flash, laughing and shaking his adversaries from him. A heavy fist crashed against his mouth, wiping his laughter away. Vicomte Roger raised a hand in signal to one of his spearmen; but Alphonse waved the soldier back.

"Wait!" he commanded softly. "The big lad holds his own. I would not have a good fight spoiled."

PIERRE FAIDIT held his own indeed. Though the four against him were all big fellows, and quite as old as he, he overtopped them by a head. Far broader of shoulder than they, he used his powerful hands with force and skill. Two he knocked reeling with successive blows before the second pair came to close grips; then, one arm about each of these, he strained them to him till they gasped for pain and breathlessness. Bringing their heads together with a smart crack, he let them drop.

One of those who had first fallen staggered up again; but seeing Pierre make for him, he backed rapidly toward his own boat. There he turned quickly, and snatched up an oar.

"Hold fast! No murder!" shouted Count Alphonse. He urged his horse toward the boat as the beaten fisher-lad whirled his ugly weapon. Pierre dropped to the ground to avoid it, and the broad ash blade swished within a foot of the count's nose. Instantly the nobleman was out of the saddle, and his strong fingers fast in the offender's collar.

"Is it not enough," he roared, "that you must four of you fall on one, without trying to butcher him? Fair play, you cowards!"

The startled boy strove to wriggle away; then, as his slow wits took in the rich chain mail and velvet of his captor, he stiffened, gray under his sea-tan. "*Oy Deus!*" he whimpered. "Pardon, my good lord!"

Fast in the grip of the spearmen, the other three were dragged to the count's feet. One soldier laid an officious hand on Pierre's arm. Smiling again, the son of Jehan Faidit took the hand in his own fingers, squeezed it till the soldier's nails trickled blood, and threw it scornfully aside. Vicomte Roger drew up, his face black as a thundercloud. He would have spoken; but Count Alphonse silenced him with a gesture. "Let me deal with them, Roger," he commanded. "Now, Pierre, what is this quarrel that moves your companions to set on you so villainously?"

Pierre shrugged, but neither knelt nor bowed; his native grace seemed somehow to acquit him of discourtesy. His great dark eyes twinkled merrily in his handsome face; his cheeks were ruddy under their southern olive. He carried the weight of his splendidly muscled body with lithe ease; the poise of his curly head on its sculptured neck had all the dignity of a Cæsar's.

"I sought no quarrel, my lord count," he answered.

Alphonse looked searchingly at him. "How know you who I am?" he questioned.

The boy bowed to Roger of Béziers. "I know my master, the vicomte," he replied. "There is but one man whom he would allow to take even so small an affair out of his hands. You are the Count of Toulouse, *monseigneur!*"

Alphonse laughed.

"This lad has wits as well as fists!" he

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cried; and then, turning to the four frightened captives:

"Explain, you rascals, if ye would not be whipped!"

The four stole scared glances at one another, till one, more dogged, spoke out with averted eyes:

"If it please your lordship, this Pierre Faidit is a sorcerer. Every day he lures our catch from our nets to his! We go out at morning, and at sunset we return empty-handed, or near it. He comes back before the day is half done, with such a haul as your grace sees there! It is black magic, by which he takes our living from us! For this reason we pulled back after him today, to beat the magic out of him!"

Suddenly grave, Count Alphonse looked askance from his captive to Pierre.

"Is this true?" he asked, crossing himself. "Do you practise the black art?"

Roger of Béziers was shuddering.

"If he does, then, turbot or no turbot, he shall hang!" he swore.

Pierre's eyes swept proudly from his master to the greater baron.

"It is fisherman's luck," he answered. "Providence is good to me. I have no dealing with evil powers. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost be my witness!"

The count's brow cleared. Seeing no fiends rise in blue smoke to seize the boy, he was satisfied. The names of the Trinity must infallibly disclose a wizard.

"Free the prisoners!" Alphonse commanded. "The lad is innocent, and his assailants fools. If they fight on such unfair terms again, whip the skin from their bones!"

The cowed bullies fell to their knees, babbling their thanks. But Count Alphonse, turning his back squarely on them, ran admiring eyes over the massive shoulders of Pierre Faidit.

"I came hither to thank you for the rarest turbot that ever passed my lips," he said. "But I think you would make a better soldier than fisherman. Will you go to Toulouse with me, and serve under my banner? I will buy your services of the vicomte."

The boy's eyes shone with sudden joy. "I have dreamed and prayed," he cried, "that I should some day wear a sword! If my lord vicomte will but consent——"

Roger nodded. Snatching up the count's hand, the fisherboy kissed it in an abandon of devotion.

"Give me but time to say farewell to my mother!" he begged. "I will come back instantly!"

And so, by fisherman's luck, Pierre became a soldier.

ALL this was sheer good fortune; but from now on, for eight years of drilling, fighting, and guard duty, luck let Pierre alone. Henceforth his rise resulted from his own efforts; nor did any one speak of Pierre's luck again till it revisited him, just for a moment, in a strange form: the death of his friend Guilhem. It was the rough voice of old Simon, the Master of the Garrison, that brought him the first news.

"Pierre, you lucky devil! The count sends for you!"

With a gasp of surprize, the big soldier leaped to his feet. A hone, he had held on one knee, slithered to the floor. Alone in his own stall in the armory, he had not heard Simon's approach. His eyes roved furtively from the keen, perfectly kept sword in the crook of his arm to the rugged face of his superior; his cheeks flushed guiltily.

The officer laughed harshly.

"Never blush, lad!" he commended. "A man may spend his time worse than in polishing his sword. Many a time I have stolen up on you, and have seen you, as now, crooning over that blade of yours as a mother croons over her child! I think the better of you for it. You keep your armor spotless, you handle your men smoothly, you do each duty with a prompt, glad perfection that brings joy to my tough old heart—I can say these things to you now, for you are no more a mere sergeant. You are to be promoted!"

Pierre Faidit flushed redder than before; but his eyes were happy.

"Promoted!" he echoed. "But that is impossible, Simon! Four years a man-at-arms, four more a sergeant! What more remains for me, the son of a humble fisherman?"

The Master of the Garrison laughed boisterously.

"What more, eh? That is good! But come, away with you to the count!"

They crossed the great armory, an enormous, stone-flagged rectangle in the heart of the castle of Toulouse: high-vaulted, and ill-lit by the straggling sunlight that filtered through the tall and narrow arrow-slots, and

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gleamed dully on stacked arms and on mail hanging from pegs and antlers.

Pushing open a heavy oaken door, old Simon led the way into the inner bailey, where soldiers off duty sprawled in the warm sun, helmets off and mail unbraced, shaking dice with noisy oaths. Then, passing along a gloomy cloister with fine wreathed capitals, the two mounted a dark, winding stair to the apartments of the count and his household.

The stair-head opened directly into a vast hall, splendidly lofty, whispering with cross-drafts from the narrow windows. The rich tapestries on the walls bellied out in the Summer breeze, so that the knights and ladies embroidered on them moved as in life. Slender columns, in rows like forest-aisles, supported the minstrels' balcony above the canopied dais; long tables, massive and carven, bore vessels of copper and chased silver. Two men-at-arms stepped aside from an inner door.

"This way!" Simon muttered; and Pierre, who had never before penetrated the lordly region above-stairs, followed wondering. From the hall they came into a series of chambers, the last of which was small and bare, but for a bench and secretary's table set with pens, parchment, and oak-gall ink. The secretary, a lean youth in black, rose as they entered, but seated himself as he recognized the Master of the Garrison.

"The count will see you presently," he announced; and they waited.

Soon the mellow sound of a gong rang from a room beyond; the sentries at the door stood aside, and the door opened. At the secretary's nod, Simon pushed Pierre within the count's own chamber.

Alphonse-Jourdain sat in a great oaken chair cushioned with leather. He was unarmed and in his leather *gipoun*, a close-fitting tunic, and hose stained with the marks of his mail. Opposite him stood Roger of Béziers, gloomy and thoughtful.

For a long moment the Count of Toulouse, looking more fiercely hawklike than usual, fastened his eyes on Pierre. The young man bore his gaze well, neither afraid nor ill at ease. At last Alphonse spoke, a sudden smile flitting over his thin lips:

"Pierre Faidit, Simon reminds me that eight years have passed since you followed me from Cap Estang. I have scarce set eyes on you since then, but I have heard much of you. Your officers have often praised your obedience, your high spirit, your soldierly qualities. Most of all they praise you as a swordsman. In the border raids, and the few small wars that have disturbed our peace, you have shown not only courage, but resource and skill as well." He paused, then asked abruptly:

"You know Guilhem, whom men called the Swordsman, because of his marvelous mastery of his weapon?"

Pierre bowed.

"I know him, my lord. He is captain of the South Gate. Though I am not under his command, he has been most kind to me, and has taught me how to use my sword."

"Even so. You may thank Simon for that. Your first year of service convinced him that you would make a rare soldier; and he begged me to put you under his care and that of Guilhem, that your strength and skill might be developed as they deserved. You have fenced with Guilhem every day, Simon says; every day that leisure afforded, for seven years. How does your skill compare with his?"

Pierre hesitated, then answered:

"For the last month, my lord, I have held my own with Guilhem."

Here Simon broke in bluntly:

"Held thine own, dolt? Nay, thou hast fairly beaten Guilhem every bout for two months past!"

The count turned to Roger of Béziers, who raised his brows as if to say:

"It is your affair, not mine." Then Alphonse said:

"Pierre Faidit, you are to replace Guilhem as captain of the South Tower. Your appointment begins now. Guilhem died of a broken neck this morning, having fallen from his horse. Do you know the responsibilities of your office?"

THE young soldier choked, half with surprize, and half with the sudden shock of his friend's death. But his grief would wait; his master must have a reply. But a captaincy! Why, many a good soldier lived and died without the hope of it. And Guilhem dead! Guilhem, his master in the trade of war; Guilhem, the strong man! With an effort at composure, he replied:

"It is my duty to hold my tower and my gate against any odds, against steel, starvation, treason; ay, against death itself! I am responsible for the safety of castle and

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city, for the honor of Toulouse!" The last words rang clear and proud; and as he heard them Alphonse straightened, and smiled.

"You have spoken well. Go to your post. One word with you, Simon!"

After Pierre had gone, the count addressed the Master of the Garrison:

"It was your advice that persuaded me to this, Simon; and I think it good advice. This lad was born to be a soldier. He is two and twenty now, you said? The best age, nowadays, for both brain and brawn. Eight years of your sharp training, and Guilhem's, ought indeed to produce a warrior. Books you know not, but you can read men. I pray, and believe, that your confidence in Pierre is not misplaced, for much depends upon it. We are at war!"

Simon's eyes gleamed.

"At war, my lord? With Aquitaine?"

"With Aquitaine—and with France! Hark you, Simon. Will the men take kindly to Pierre's promotion? He has deserved it, but few of his birth rise to a captaincy. Will the men follow him!"

"Follow him?" Simon's pride was touched. "Would I have commended him else? He is no mere fencer of the *place d'armes!* He has shown himself a champion in battle, a true swordsman, who plays for love of the game! Why, there are hard-bitten veterans, gray in your service, who would follow him to the death! They feel for him that mixture of fear and admiration that gives the soldier confidence in his officer. I would follow him myself! He will make a captain of captains!"

So luck smiled on Pierre again, and passed on; and as he had always done, Pierre made the most of what she had left him. But neither Simon, as he left his master's presence, nor that master himself, guessed how much Pierre would make out of it.

Alphonse-Jourdain handed a letter to his vassal Roger. "There you have it, as I told you," he said.

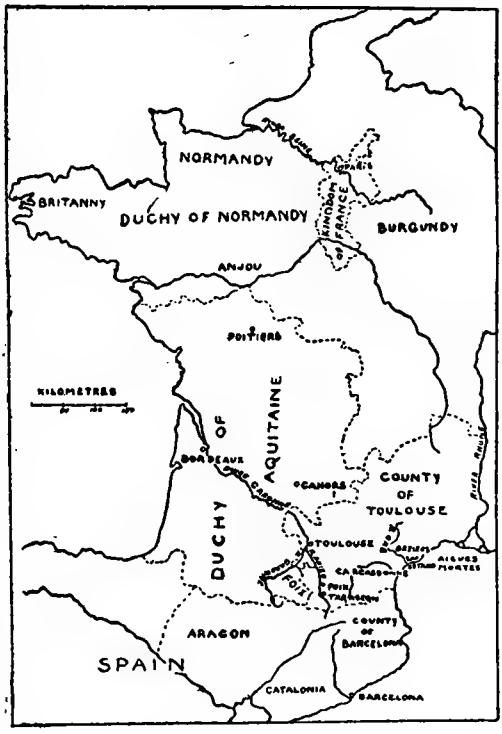
The vicomte read, slowly, anger mounting to his cheeks.

"What devil," he cried, "possesses the king of France, that he treats his truest friends so shamefully?"

Alphonse strode to the narrow window. The chamber was in the western tower, which looked straight toward the border of Aquitaine. He pointed across the open fields beyond the ramparts.

"There dwells the devil that masters the king!" he retorted. "You have felt that devil's malice yourself, Roger. It was William of Aquitaine who forced you out of your fair city of Carcassonne, and held it, till my armies chased him back to his own marches. Now it is his daughter—more wicked even than she is beautiful—who stirs up the king against me, his ally and friend! It was an ill day for Toulouse, aye, and for France, when Aliénor of Aquitaine became queen!"

"Why, then," Roger hazarded, "we shall have to face a threefold enemy: Paris and the North, Aquitaine, and Guienne!"



"Of course. King Louis would never have threatened me had not Aliénor urged him on. His wife's beauty sways his soul; her ambition and savage greed drive him to his ruin. She has hated me and mine since I saved you from her father's power; and now, with three-fourths of France behind her, she strikes through the king's mad love for her. Roger, I am sick when I think of the good French blood that must be shed through one evil woman!"

Roger pondered. Then:

"The King bids you, in this letter, to surrender all your lands save this city alone, the

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walls of which you must dismantle. If you refuse, he will attack you; if you assent, then we are both ruined, ripe for the stroke of the first turbulent baron who wins the queen's favor. Dare you refuse, my lord?"

The war-scarred face of Alphonse flushed; his fists clenched.

"I am no subject of the King of France!" he cried. "His borders stop at Avignon. I am a free prince, ruling in my own right. Louis has no more title to Toulouse than I to Paris! Resist! Aye! I will resist till no two stones of this city hold together! I will sell my liberty so dear that every house in France shall curse the name of Louis the Tyrant, Louis the Wife-ridden!"

He sat down, breathless, plucking at his beard. Then, scowling, he spoke again:

"Roger, bid my seneschal place the city in a state of defense. Have Simon call out the Municipal Guard, see to the gates and the equipping of the towers; let the engineers prepare the catapults! Send riders to Béziers and Carcassonne! Gather in all the supplies to be bought or seized throughout the countryside! We will give Louis of France a savage welcome!"

THE hosts of King Louis compassed the city on every side, a circle of steel that crossed the Garonne above and below, and swept, a forest of bristling points, up the southern and eastern heights. All day their wagon-trains crawled in, gray with dust, from Bordeaux, from Périgueux, from Cahors, from Poitiers; all day their ambulance-trains, a slow, sad procession of jolting, red-stained carts, wound back over the rutted roads.

The fair vineyards were trampled into the earth that the king's horses had fouled; the stately church-spires of Toulouse looked down on the glow of a thousand camp-fires, and stifled in the reek of burning villages. A ceaseless storm of arrows, javelins, and stones beat upon the towered walls; an answering rain of missiles poured down among the daring riders of the North.

Full-armed in ring-mail to the knees, his proud young features hidden behind the nasal and cheek-guards of a peaked helmet, Pierre Faidit measured his untried strength against one sector of the most splendid army in Europe. Looking down from the South Tower upon that portion of the king's host that confronted him, his heart swelled to think that to him had been given the task of holding them at bay. He noted the proportion of horse to foot, counted the catapults ranged against him, figured their range carefully, and ordered his own engines so as to hold the advantage without undue waste of missiles. Untried he was, but he had both courage and judgment and succeeded well.

The royal camp was indeed vast, its forces outnumbering the garrison of Toulouse at least two to one. From the north had come the king's army, well-armed and disciplined veterans of the Norman wars; from the west the gorgeous feudal hosts of Aquitaine flooded down the Bordeaux and Bayonne highways: men of short stature, but sturdy and inured to warfare. These were the men of Aliénor, the queen, who fought for revenge.

As much as he outmanned his enemy, so much also King Louis surpassed him in number and weight of siege engines. But the walls were staunch and high, so that, to inflict any damage, the royal engineers and their cavalry supports must come dangerously close. The result was that Louis lost two men and two catapults to every one he put out of action.

Twelve days the siege dragged on, with no general engagement; so far, the advantage lay with the garrison. But Alphonse the Great, hurrying from tower to tower, saw how soon the tide must turn against him. Louis had swept down on Toulouse within ten days after his letter, proving that he had counted in advance on war.

Thus, before the count had been able to draw on the stored grain and the flocks of his domain for sufficient provision, the king had cut him off from his own fertile plains, and now Louis had all the countryside to feed his troops, without counting the inexhaustible supplies of Aquitaine. Meantime, Alphonse must feed not only his garrison, but the sixty thousand non-combatants of his civilian population. Unless the king lost heart within a fortnight, Toulouse must come down to half-rations. And Louis was notorious for dogged courage.

On the fourteenth morning, Pierre looked down from the battlements of his tower, to see unwonted bustle in the lines opposing his position. Here lay the host of Aquitaine and Guienne, their camp like a crescent moon, with horns that extended far around to east and west, their center supported by two companies of Burgundian engineers.

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It was the Burgundians Pierre dreaded most, with their long-armed catapults that ceaselessly drove his little garrison to cover behind the merlons. Now, those thick-set men of the East, clad in half-mail, had dragged into position an extra battery of heavy engines, and toiled like ants to roll up the heavy stones that served for ammunition. Behind the Burgundians, and out of range, the Aquitanian cavalry was forming as if for an assault.

Swiftly Pierre despatched a messenger to the count, and on his own responsibility ordered such men as he could spare to extend the battlements with balks of timber. The thrill of approaching battle hummed in his veins; it would be his to resist the first shock of the assault. Proudly he measured the depth of the forming lines across the moat; they were the chosen heroes of the South, who had won glory from Syria to Spain, of whose dauntless valor troubadours had sung. And he, Pierre, would bear the brunt of their resistless shock!

But the orders that came back from Alphonse-Jourdain cooled his ardor.

"It is only a feint," the messenger reported back, "to hold your men-at-arms and engines where they are. The attack will center on the North Gate, where the king's catapults have made a wide breach. Send half your engines to the North Tower at once!" Pierre had no choice but to obey.

Yet all day long the Aquitanian cavalry massed over against Pierre's post; and all day long the king concentrated his energies in widening the northern breach, without ordering the assault. Nevertheless the garrison maintained a feverish vigilance well into the night, certain that the attack must come.

And come it did, shortly after midnight. The watchers on the walls were first aware of the soft *clink-clink* of muffled mail, and the grating of feet on pebbles; then a trumpet in the north tore the night with its blare. Instantly the walls of Toulouse were starred with the light of torches; great flares of pitch and pine-twigs were thrown out from the battlements; and against their glare the defenders on the northern wall saw a host of dismounted men-at-arms gathered close for the assault. Alphonse had read the royal plan unerringly.

Every third catapult on the wall rained down fresh-kindled flares, while the rest hurled their jagged missiles full into the massed assailants. With one wild yell of triumph, the royal host dashed toward the breach. As they came on, light-armed engineers sprang ahead, throwing bundles of fagots into the moat to form a bridge.

IT WAS war between masses of men and masses of rock. The count had called in all the catapults that could be spared from the east, west, and south walls to repel this stroke; and in the glare of light that shone red on the breasts of the assailants, three hundred engines hurled a ceaseless tempest of stone into the ranks of France. Yet on they came, across the moat under the curtain-wall, and surged up to the jagged twelve-foot hole that yawned in the face of the North Tower.

From the South Tower, Pierre sent messenger after messenger to inquire concerning the progress of the battle. Nothing could be seen across that great expanse of night-wrapped city save the distant flare of torches and pitch-balls; and the mingled uproar of clashing steel, of many-throated cries of pain and rage, and the clanging impact of stone on armor, reached him only as a faint, confused echo that told him no more than he knew.

He could do nothing; though the success of that fierce attack on the other side of the town would mean defeat, rapine, and ruin to Toulouse, he must stand helpless at his post until the count should call on him for reenforcement. The fight was still indecisive when his last messenger returned.

For, while he raged with disappointment, Pierre kept constantly in mind that his duty demanded vigilance as well as patience. Unceasingly he maintained his watch, going the rounds to see that his sentries were at their posts and alert, and such engines as remained to him ready. It was in the dark hour before dawn that his own keen ears caught some stealthy sound in the night; and then one of his sentries gave the alarm. Instantly Pierre ordered his depleted force of engineers to hurl flares over the wall. They obeyed; and Pierre saw, in the swift crimson light, a dense mass of men at the foot of his own tower!

Scarcely had he seen to the pointing of the catapults when messengers ran up breathless to announce that the men of Guienne had closed in on the east and west, narrowing the circle about the city and squeezing in the defense, to distract the count's forces from the main attack on the North Tower.

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Now Pierre understood: while the Parisian troops forced the assault, the queen's southerners were to attack the South; on east and west the men of Guienne merely waited, to reenforce whichever attack first succeeded, and prevent that part of the garrison which they confronted from sending any help.

Then Pierre struck, without waiting for orders which might not come. At his command, the buzz of two hundred taut gut cables ripped the air; and from the whole length of tower and curtain-wall stones, beams, and pikes crashed into the ranks of Aquitaine. The howl that followed was drowned by the crash of a hundred missiles against the battlements; and Pierre knew that the king's engines had been moved silently up, behind the Aquitanians, under cover of the dark.

The first volley had been too low to break over the wall; but the second would be better aimed. Instantly Pierre ordered his men under cover of the merlons, and waited for the escalade. Any other course would cost too much in life. While he waited, peering down between two merlons, a hand touched his shoulder. It was the Vicomte of Béziers.

"The count has sent me to take command," Roger announced. Under other conditions Pierre would have resented this seeming evidence of mistrust; now he welcomed it as an indication that the North Tower still held its own.

For a quarter of an hour the Burgundians kept up a steady hail of stones against the south battlements; then, suddenly, they ceased. Roger sprang to the ramparts with a cheer, the Tower garrison closing in about him. Trembling with excitement, Pierre knew the escalade was on; the king's engines had ceased only because the Aquitanians must have climbed so high that further volleys would have struck them down.

Roger of Béziers, hot-headed for all his campaigns, heeded only the imminent attack; and Pierre was forced to attend to that which Roger had forgotten. Detaching a score of men, he ordered the catapults tilted straight down, and poured a dense volley into the gleaming mass that his flares showed clinging just below the battlements.

The rain of rocks and timbers smashed down the whole crest of the climbing horde; they collapsed, the ladders breaking beneath them and sweeping away as many more. But a dozen ladders held; and up these, before Pierre could reload, the ardent Southern infantry scaled the wall.

Even as they swarmed over the battlements, the garrison charged to meet them. Pierre waited only to kindle the two great cressets that lighted the curtain-wall, and then threw himself into the fight. It was a weird battle in the air, armor and steel blades darting crimson flashes and ringing like a thousand forges. The advantage of position lay with the garrison; but numbers were with the enemy, who could scarce have been less than three thousand against the six hundred of the vicomte.

Bellowing swift commands, Roger of Béziers marshaled his men in the very teeth of the attack; then, sword flashing, he closed in. His fiery courage spurred his men on to heroism; but the pressure was great. Step by step the garrison gave ground across the wall. Crying them on, Roger bored deep into the hostile tide; spears swirled about him, and still striking, he fell. His overthrow was hardly noticed, so close-pressed were his outnumbered followers. On flooded the assault, bearing them back toward the inner wall, against whose face they must soon be crushed in red ruin.

Pierre, fighting desperately in the center, knew now what war meant. His great body was a river of sweat under his armor; the blows that rang on his helmet deafened him. All the skill that Guilhem the Swordsman had taught him flowed invincibly from his brain-centers to his mighty arms; but the throng of foes was so dense that he could not parry every thrust. His great stature and terrible strokes attracted blows; for the fiery Aquitanians sought glory in death.

Then the boy suddenly became aware that Roger of Béziers was no longer in the battle. It dawned upon him that Roger must be slain, and he, Pierre, in command once more. His voice rang high in a rallying shout; he threw himself against the massed rank before him like a thunder-bolt. Redoubling his strokes, by sheer skill and force he carved a gap in the opposing line, and cried his men on to widen it.

THE defense stiffened; the battle began to sway, back and forth along the wall. Thrilling with triumph, Pierre wielded his sword with all the vigor he could summon. His example fired his men with new courage; on either side of him the Toulousans formed a narrow, dense phalanx,

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and bending their backs, charged into the gap. His great blade dripping, his shield hacked to splinters, Pierre fought like one inspired.

"At them!" he roared. "St. Sernin for Toulouse!" Wielded more swiftly and deftly than shield could parry, his sword bit deep into flesh and mail and bone. His eyes seemed to burn in their sockets; his head reeled with his efforts. But his spirit spread like flame through his men; the lines swayed farther and farther; deadly swirls opened in the press, with vicious thrusts and knife-strokes. Then, with slowly gathering momentum, the men of Toulouse pushed their enemies back toward the merlons.

The slight advance gave more room for weapon-play, and they of Aquitaine were torn into disarray. Now Pierre ordered a second rush, and led it with a burst of swift strokes. Triumph raising their hearts, the garrison quickly formed shoulder to shoulder, and swept on in a terrible wave.

Then, before Pierre's eyes, the Aquitanians seemed to melt away; they were mysteriously caught up in a stream of men that poured from the curtain-walls on either hand and drove them like sheep over the battlements. In one frightful avalanche, they rolled over the edge and dropped to destruction far below. A few moments more of scattered fighting, and the men of Aquitaine, save for a handful of prisoners, had ceased to live.

Leaning on his sword, Pierre drew breath in great gulps. He felt himself seized and shaken joyously. Alphonse-Jourdain himself clutched his hand and wrung it.

"Well done, Pierre Faidit!" he cried. "You had them beaten even before we came to the rescue from the North Wall! Never have I seen better sword-play!"

Pierre stared at him.

"Then—" he gasped.

"Aye, we drove them back from the breach, just in time to reenforce you. But Louis has still enough men to starve us out, if he is prudent enough to waste no more of them—Saints have mercy!"

Hastening to a pile of dead and wounded by the merlons, he raised a bleeding body in his arms. It was Roger of Béziers.

Pierre stooped over the wounded man, took off his helmet, and unlaced his mail. The vicomte's lips parted slightly; his eyes quivered open.

"Thank God!" the count exclaimed. "See, his head is gashed, his shoulder pierced by a lance; but he will live, I trust."

"Aye, he will live," Pierre muttered. "But he will fight no more while this siege lasts."

"THE count has transferred me to the South Wall," Simon explained. "Nay, I shall not disturb your authority; you are captain here. But now that fresh reenforcements have joined the king. and the breach in the North Tower is repaired, our lord foresees a strong attack here."

Pierre nodded.

"Aye," he said. "The king believes this gate weakened by the Aquitanian assault. Moreover, this is a hard position to defend. See how the river borders the road, protecting any advance from such sallies as we might make from the Western wall!"

The master of the garrison smiled.

"Your head has more wit than a duke's! Such is doubtless the king's plan; and he is a fool if he acts otherwise. He has three thousand fresh men from Paris, while our bellies are pinched with hunger. If he lets us starve a week more, he can safely trust all his hopes to one grand stroke."

"Do you fear?"

"I never fear till I am beaten, and then fear is useless," the veteran answered. "Has not the count the cunning of a Cæsar? And has he not discovered a Hector in you?"

Pierre laughed.

"I have heard the tale of Messire Hector from the chaplain. Was he not killed by King Achilles? And shall I fare better, who am but a sorry Hector, with the reek of fish-bait still on my fingers?"

BUT eight days passed, and the expected attack did not come. Made prudent by their losses, the royal hosts camped sullenly about the city, and let hunger fight for them. Their engineers continually beat upon the walls with their missiles, hopeful of a second breach, and certain that their activities prevented the damages they made from being repaired. The cavalry performed stately evolutions up and down the plain, but kept out of range; bodies of footmen drilled ankle-deep in the dust. But as the days passed with no assault, Alphonse began to feel the prick of fear.

He could not hold out much longer: the

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miserable half-rations Simon served out were cut down once more. The citizens fared worse than the soldiers; reduced to the flesh of dogs and the scraping of cheese-rinds, they deafened the provost's ears with their lamentations. A little more, and they might flock to the castle, demanding that the count surrender rather than starve them further.

Something of this sort Simon remarked to Pierre, laboring over the snarled ends of a broken catapult-cable. He was gloomy enough, now that his lord had lost confidence. Pierre, who had said nothing for some time, now interrupted him in the midst of his grumbling.

"How many stones have we hurled from this tower in the last two days?" he asked abruptly.

"How do I know? Close to three a minute, and we are running short! Out of food, out of——"

"Have you begun digging up the cobble-stones?"

Simon snorted.

"Cobble-stones? They have not weight enough, baby!"

Pierre hummed a snatch of song.

"True," he said lightly. "All the more reason for shooting them into the king's camp!"

Straightening up, Simon darted a keen glance at him.

"What devil's scheme do you hatch behind that angel's face?" he asked.

Pierre became serious.

"Why, this," he answered. "If the king delays his attack much longer, we shall be too weak to fight. Our only hope lies in the faint chance that he may attack soon, while we have strength left to resist. Why not trick Louis into thinking us weaker than we are, so that he will strike at once?"

"Trick a cat into eating hay!" Simon scoffed. "Why, it was only last night that the count said to me: 'Simon, it is all up. The king has gone back to his old method. Rash at first, he becomes cautious with defeat. He will starve us out without the need for a blow!' "

Pierre shook his curly head.

"I have netted cunning fish ere now," he said. "Let the bait be luscious enough, and the fish hungry, and—you have him! Look you, Simon: rip up the cobbles from the streets around this gate, and use them only from the catapults on this Tower. As you say, they are too light to do much harm; but all the better. Louis will think us out of weightier missiles. Also, discharge many cobbles this morning, fewer between noon and dark, a very few tomorrow morn, and—none tomorrow afternoon! And now, take me to the count!"

An hour later Pierre and the master of the garrison stood in the count's presence. He had just finished checking off the latest list of their dwindling supplies, and his face was clouded.

"Well?" he asked, dismissing his clerk. "Ha! Pierre!"

Pierre approached somewhat timidly, grown suddenly fearful lest his cunning plan seem absurd to the count. But it was Simon who spoke:

"My lord," he began, in tones that held an eager curiosity beneath their gruffness, "our brave young cockerel has a scheme for forcing Louis to attack."

The count smiled bitterly.

"It will not do, Pierre. I know Louis Capet; nothing will drive him to rashness again, once he has suffered loss. He is a lion at the beginning of a campaign, a mule at the end."

"My lord!" Pierre implored. "Will you but hear me?"

The count assented; and for five minutes Pierre spoke uninterrupted. When he had finished, the despair had left his master's features.

"How know you that the royal forces are discontent and losing discipline?" he asked. "I have seen nothing of it."

"I have watched," Pierre replied quickly, "hour by hour, day by day! Twice a day his cavalry has approached almost within range of my catapults, to see what damage their own have done the Tower. Each successive time, a longer space passed between the call for the retreat and the withdrawal of the horsemen. Yesterday, they withdrew slowly and irregularly; in the afternoon, the trumpet had to recall them twice. That means that the king's troops are impatient for battle. Their anger at their first repulse, and their knowledge that we grow weaker with hunger every day, make them so eager for revenge that they can scarce be held back. Moreover, I have seen officers in fine armor as slow to withdraw as their men. The high pride that burns in the blood of the northern barons, their love of open fight, causes them to chafe at delay. Let them

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once be persuaded that our catapults are out of munitions, and the king will not be able to withhold them from the attack. If he refuses to order the assault, their own impatience will force his hand. They will compel him to assail us!"

Alphonse nodded.

"I did not see that, being overbusy with hurrying from tower to tower, from storehouse to provost's office. But you, Simon, an old soldier, have been eight days with Pierre on the Tower, and have not seen what he has seen?"

"Why, if you will take me from patrolling the ramparts, and set me to pointing catapults," the veteran retorted, "how can you expect me to watch horsemen? I was too busy smashing Burgundian engines."

Alphonse ignored him.

"And the rest, Pierre?" he asked.

When Pierre had finished his reply—which was uttered not only with all the eloquence of his lips, but with a multitude of eager gestures as well, the count summoned his clerk.

"Pen, ink, and my seal!" he demanded. "You shall have all you ask, Pierre! St. Sernin! What a net you have spread for the king, fisherman's son!"

AT NOON of the next day, Pierre's trap was in readiness. It involved certain operations within the South Gate, at which a thousand civilian laborers toiled under Pierre's orders. Also, a series of ditches was dug from the river, converging on the gateway. Meanwhile, Simon carried out Pierre's program of a dwindling rain of cobbles from the wall above; and by noon every catapult on the South Tower was idle. Between tall buildings, in every street near the gate, the gleam of mail indicated the presence of many men-at-arms.

On the north, east, and west walls the volleys from the engines had likewise diminished, but only slightly. Everything gave the impression that the South Tower having quite exhausted its missiles, the other batteries, though still too well supplied to be safely attacked, were unable to assist the South. Yet very quietly, under cover of the merlons, Simon's engineers had been gathering a secret store of big stones. Just before noon, four hundred archers took up their position on the Tower, but took care not to show themselves between the merlons.

Pierre cast a satisfied glance from his work to the teeming southern plain. Already the royal forces were nibbling at the bait. Late on the previous afternoon, when the Tower's reply to the Burgundian catapults had grown preceptibly feebler, small movements of horse and foot toward the walls betrayed the growing eagerness and curiosity of the enemy.

Well after dark, a stealthy reconnaissance by the king's infantry roused Pierre first to startled vigilance, then to stifled laughter. In the morning, the royal camp had pushed out a great, gleaming arm of steel-clad horsemen almost within stone-range; then, as the engines on the battlements withdrew entirely from action, parties of light-armed cavalry darted forward to explore, as best they might, the condition of the defense.

They saw no heads exposed between the crenelations, no movement of the great engine-arms, that now pointed, empty and harmless, to the blue sky. Only an occasional javelin, ill-aimed and barely tossed into the moat, told the false message that Pierre wished to convey: that famine had too far enfeebled the garrison for even effective hand-to-hand fighting.

Two hours after noon. The long arm of cavalry pushed out slowly, steadily, till its tip was well within range. But the Tower was silent, apparently deserted. A single troop, under the king's banner, dashed up to the very lip of the moat, so close that the fall of a single timber might have crushed half a dozen at once. But still, seeming cowed and beaten, the garrison hid behind its bulwarks.

A trumpet shrilled behind the king's lines; and as if launched by the sound, a swift torrent of horsemen, from east and west and north, galloped toward the south, with a thunder of hoofs that fairly shook the plain. It was then that Pierre laughed aloud; for the king, convinced that the South Tower was without missiles and weak with starvation, was concentrating his whole force upon it for one final attack!

It seemed an eternity to Pierre before the royal host was at length marshaled in column for the assault; and the sight, for a moment, filled him with surprize. Then, fathoming the reason, he nodded to himself. The royal forces were arrayed as if to charge, *on horseback*, against the stout walls of the Tower! But the purpose was clear, and—

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if the king had been acting on fact instead of belief—sound enough.

The French host knew no reason to fear those lifeless, apparently harmless walls; so they planned to spare themselves the oppression of an approach on foot, weighed down with heavy armor, under the hot sun. They expected to ride in unchecked and in comfort, batter down the gate, and sweep into the helpless city. Such opposition as they must face would doubtless be massed inside the gate; from horseback they would have the advantage of height and power in their sword-strokes. A cavalry assault on a walled city was unusual, but doubtless seemed wisest against a city whose walls were defenseless.

When at last the trumpets blew the charge, Pierre's soul was uplifted as on wings; for the sight was wonderful. Spurring forward briskly, the vanguard came on first, while the rest reined in their impatient chargers till they should have room. Rank by rank, the vast body of horsemen rippled forward, their long mail flashing back the sun that kissed their helments. Now they were trotting; now—to impress the starving garrison—they broke into the maddening gallop of the charge!

Their spears, useless till they reached the gate, were carried in rest; but they rode with tossing plumes and flowing manes, each man hunched behind his great round-shouldered shield. The air roared with the crackle of three thousand wind-tormented pennons. First came the King's Own, the knights of Paris; then the big-shouldered men of Champagne; last of all they of Guienne and the remnants of the Aquitanians, battered but dauntless. The banners of ten provinces waved above the proud barons who captained them.

A hand touched Pierre's shoulder; it was the count.

"It works, lad!" he whispered eagerly. "Ah, we should thank God that the king did not suspect our trick!"

"I counted on his suspecting," Pierre answered; "but I held it certain that his barons and the army would not suspect. They are impatient, warlike men, hungry for revenge as we are for food. France is too young a kingdom for a king to hold them from the throat of a shaken foe. They have forced Louis to choose between attack and the loss of their support." He broke off, and pointed.

The advance was in full career, a rushing river of steel, tossing spears as a spring flood tosses straw and drifting wood. Their columns seemed interminable, irresistible; yet still the walls of Toulouse were unstirred. Now the first rank splashed into the moat, the horses—which were themselves unarmored—swimming gallantly. The water frothed and creamed with the churning mass of them, till its banks overflowed.

Then at last Pierre ordered the men-at-arms crouched behind the merlons to cast spears; but feebly, and few at a time. Here and there, by sheer gravity, a point found its way into mail and flesh; here and there a horse went under, a rider pitched into the water. But the damage was too slight for more than ridicule. A mighty roar of laughter rose from the dense ranks of the North.

Even as they laughed, their first four ranks had crossed the moat, and advanced in three bounds to the base of the tower. Lance-butts hammered on the gate; a thousand throats yelled themselves hoarse with triumph, while still the moat boiled with those that came behind. At the rear of the cavalry pelted the engineers, with beams and crossties to make a bridge for the infantry. Last of all the pike-bearing footmen ran in irregular bursts of speed, trailing their weapons to save strength for the fight.

Pierre's eyes danced.

"Now!" he shouted to his engineers; and sent a messenger scurrying to the Southeast Gate, to the troops who, in accordance with his plan, had been concentrated there.

Alphonse-Jourdain swung to the door. He was armed, helmeted, and girt with his long sword. Pierre caught his arm.

"You lead, my lord?" he asked. The count nodded curtly.

"Then let me ride with the spearmen! Simon can hold the Tower!"

Alphonse found time to chuckle.

"Your horse is waiting at the Southeast Gate. Go, young fisher after men, and St. Pierre speed thy sword this day better than he sped his own!"

Pierre ran from the Tower at his master's heels.

THE South Gate quivered under a rain of blows; a dozen dismounted horsemen battered upon it fiercely with a green pine log, while the dense column behind them waited with thirsty

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swords. The moat, now bridged by Louis' engineers, gleamed with the mail of close-packed horse and foot; behind, the long column had deployed, to be nearer the doomed city.

Crash! One massive oaken plank, torn from the spikes that held it, fell shattered under the archway. The blows redoubled, till the whole great surface parted at every joint. Then, all at once, the gate burst in. Like the sea smashing through a broken dike, the royal army poured in.

As they broke through the breach, a trumpet pealed from the wall. The battlements of the Tower, and of the adjoining curtain-walls, leaped to terrible life. The twang of engines shrieked above the clang of armor and the shouts of the assault. An avalanche of stone streamed from the Tower's catapults into the rear of the king's great host, driving the rearguard forward. Forward: for no man cared to retreat when the city lay open to conquest and pillage. As they came on, four hundred archers riddled them with three-foot shafts.

The surge was irresistible. Beginning in a swift rush at the van, it spread more and more slowly down the line, and ended in a dogged push at the rear. The king's army flooded over the fallen gate; while from the walls stones, spears, and arrows drove upon them pitilessly.

The onrush of spurred and stumbling horses not only could not be stopped; it could not stop itself. Sheer weight and momentum made it an irresponsible force, mad with passion to kill, blinded, each rank, by the mass of steel backs in front. The mighty column, crowding the archway to the walls, burst through—to destruction.

For beyond the gate, where the open street should be, Pierre's thousand workmen had dug a terrible abyss, deep, with shelving sides, filled with water led by channels from the Garonne. Into this vast pit the whole vanguard shot, rank after rank, driven by those behind. The fall tumbled riders from their horses; weighted down by their heavy mail, kicked and trampled by their struggling horses, barons, captains and men-at-arms hurtled splashing to a hopeless death. The cries of the trapped were drowned by the din of hoofs to the rear; all warning was lost in that headlong charge for victory. Rank by rank and troop by troop, that tide of glorious cavalry tumbled in unending ruin into the net of Pierre the Fisherman. Nor could the main host see beyond the shadowy reentrant angle of the gateway; so that none guessed the death ahead till he was engulfed.

But the end must come, for the horrible trap was filling fast; and soon the rearguard would ride in over a human causeway. Now, therefore, Alphonse-Jourdain sounded the advance. The Southeast Gate was flung open: a bridge of beams and planking was thrown across the moat; and four thousand men-at-arms—who had massed there under Pierre's directions—sallied out beyond the wall.

There they deployed, and swept on in line of battle. Only the royal rear could see their charge, for they were hidden by the south wall from the main army, which still poured into the death-trap of the South Gate.

Now the riders of Toulouse broke into the gallop. One hundred yards—fifty—ten. They smote the hostile rear a smashing flanking blow, whose impetus bore them deep into the crowded ranks. The weight of their horses, the swift strokes of their swords, wrought ruin. Seized with consternation, the men of Guienne fled first, foot and horse. After them pelted all who could tear themselves from the destruction of the pit.

As they ran, the archers and engineers on the battlements tore and battered them, while the count's cavalry wrought, in pursuit, worse havoc than in the first charge. At last Alphonse, weary of slaughter, gave the order to retire. All that remained of the king's army was a scattered, panic-stricken rout, and captives too many to count upon the field. Proudly, with heads erect, the garrison turned back to the city they had saved. Yet a thousand men sped to harry the abandoned royal camp, that Toulouse might eat.

But Pierre turned not back. His ardor, and the terror inspired by his sword, had carried him too deep among the fugitives to hear the trumpet. Followed close by his own men, he harried hard on the heels of the retreat for a full two leagues. The fleeing horde was strung out in a pitiful, ragged chain that trailed away toward the Aquitanian border. Along their flank Pierre raged, physical hunger forgotten in that greater hunger for glory which is the pride of France. Nor did he stop to strike the gasping soldiers that raised wretched hands

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toward the blow, but spurred on, seeking nobler prey.

He found it at last. Followed rather than guarded by a score of splendid spearmen whom his finer horse outstripped, a tall man in magnificent armor rode full career for Aquitaine and safety. At sight of him, Pierre raised the view-halloo, for here was surely a baron at least. With a shout to his men, Pierre drove the spurs home in fleet pursuit.

The men of the South Tower responded with a splendid burst of speed. Well they knew their captain's purpose, and well they fulfilled it. As the fugitive nobleman roweled his swift barb, widening the space between himself and those who should have guarded him, Pierre's troop caught them up, shot past, wheeled, and flung themselves between. In a flurry of sword-strokes, king's men and Toulousans clashed together.

The matchless horse which had separated the French baron from his men was in a fair way to bear him safely out of Pierre's reach, though the latter urged his own heavier mount to its utmost. Already the fugitive was so far ahead that his very dust dispersed before Pierre could overtake it. But suddenly the barb stumbled and went down; his tall rider rolled free, and strove to resume his flight on foot. He went not far, for his mail was heavy. Hearing hoof-beats close behind, he faced about and drew his sword. With a shout, Pierre was upon him.

"Yield!" he cried; but the other smiled sourly.

"If thou—" he used the "thou" of contemptuous address—"if thou wert unhorsed as I am, I would kill thee for thy insolence. Thy charger gives thee the advantage!"

Instantly Pierre dismounted. The first touch of steel told him his enemy was no common swordsman. The Northerner's supple wrist and skilful play for a moment held his younger foe fiercely at distance. But Pierre's giant strength, backed by a skill scarce less, drove him back and back. The older man grew weaker; yet he fought on, with a set and dogged smile, till Pierre beat his weapon from his hand.

"Now yield!" he commanded.

"Not to thee!" the noble cried angrily. "I would die rather than give up my sword to a common man-at-arms!" And he threw himself sullenly down in the road. Sheathing his sword, Pierre picked him up bodily, and flung him into his own saddle. The result set him to gasping.

"Hands off!" his prisoner cried in a blaze of fury. "Fool! Dog! I am the King of France!"

But Pierre only held him tighter. Behind him the *mêlée* died down in a final clatter of steel, a shout of triumph; and Louis of France rode back toward Toulouse a prisoner, behind his captive bodyguard.

"WHO was he who took me?" the king asked wearily. Alphonse stood by the side of his own chair of state, in which he had made the king sit, like a victor rather than a captive.

"He is called Pierre Faidit," the count replied. "Your ransom is his; I will send for him."

So Pierre stood in the presence of King Louis, and bowed low—not to the king, but to the unhappy prisoner. Now Louis was a proud man, but a thrifty one; and some years as monarch of a bankrupt kingdom had taught him to bargain without shame, where the treasury of France was involved. Likewise he knew Alphonse-Jourdain for the pattern of generous chivalry. Thus his first words now to Pierre were:

"You are to set my ransom, having captured me. Being a commoner, you will not ask overmuch?"

"I am a fisherman's son," Pierre answered. "I know little of ransoms. Let my lord set the price."

Louis had judged Alphonse correctly. His magnanimity, and his desire for peace with France, had to contend only with his sense of what was due Pierre. Moreover, he wished to comfort his captive, and so essayed a feeble jest.

"I shall not demand much," he said. "It was not our power that captured your majesty; it was fisherman's luck!"

"Not so, my lord!" Pierre broke in. "It was God's Providence!"

Though niggardly, Louis was the most pious man in France, and loved piety in another.

"Well said!" he approved. "Be ever humble, young man, and grateful to God for your success!"

Straightway Alphonse, seeing the king for a moment in a better mood, spoke that which was burning in his mind:

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"Will your majesty concede our independence? Will you make peace? If so, the ransom will be small!"

Louis laughed, a little bitterly.

"Make peace with you? Ay! Being ill-counseled, I have treated you shamefully! I will give the boy a thousand crowns, make peace on your terms, and—God grant it may bring joy to our poor France!"

"Amen!" said Alphonse; and "Amen!" said Pierre Faidit, who had fished for an army, and caught a king in his net.

"MR. HAMILTON"

by Hugh Pendexter

WHEN Kenneth McKenzie was in charge of Fort Union on the upper Missouri and the American Fur Company was absorbing or crushing all competitors, Union was naturally the rendezvous of many picturesque and often blood-thirsty characters. The majority of these rough mountain men were on the same plane, and for that reason one member of the clerical force stood out most prominently since he never reflected the wild and rugged environment.

Larpenteur was the chronicler of the "Upper Missouri Outfit," and Fort Union speaks of him as, "a Mr. Hamilton—an old gentleman." He says that Hamilton was a mystery, but obviously had held a high social position in England and possibly was a "scion of nobility." He is described as always wearing the finest of clothing, of being exquisite in his dress and insisting on being garbed in the latest London fashion. His shirt bosoms were ruffled, and he was immaculate with "a clean shirt and a bath" every day. He was "polished, and scented, and oiled," and wore a big gold chain around his neck.

He had sought work and a refuge in the isolation of the upper Missouri—this was in 1835—and yet he abhorred Indians and called them filthy beasts, and could not bear to have one touch him. On one occasion an Indian, not knowing his distaste for red men, ventured to touch a beautiful colored silk handkerchief, whereupon Mr. Hamilton threw the handkerchief into the fireplace.

Larpenteur describes him as being some fifty years of age, suffering from gout, crabbed in temper, and generally disliked by his white associates. But he was always highly respected. He became bookkeeper at Fort Union, and later was transferred to St. Louis to act as cashier, where he died. Every year, says Larpenteur, boxes arrived from London, filled with the latest modes.

On one occasion Mr. Hamilton was the unwitting cause of three deaths. The May express from Fort Clark—the A. F. C. post at the Mandan villages—brought word to Union that a big war-party of Big Bellies and Mandans were on their way to Union. As was customary among the tribes frequenting the fort in those days, the whites were warned to keep inside the fort at night because the war-party would fire into any lodges they might find outside the fort. It happened that two lodges were outside the fort. Larpenteur had been permitting the inmates to sleep inside the stockade, for he had charge of the gates at that time. This was unknown to any one. Then came the night when permission to sleep inside was sought from Mr. Hamilton, and, as it was contrary to custom, the irascible Englishman refused. Late that night the war-party arrived and promptly kept their promise by discharging their weapons into the lodges, killing a white man, a squaw and a boy.

What was the cause of the cultured Englishman fleeing to the wilds of the new world and enduring the company of a race he detested? Not poverty—for the huge boxes, crammed with all that intrigued the London eye of fashion, arrived with clock-like regularity. He is entitled to credit for remaining at what for him was a hateful task, and in what for him was a repelling environment. He loathed the red men and called them names; he dressed for dinner and had his daily bath and clean shirt. And he kept his secret.

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The Pathless Trail*

A Four-Part Story

CONCLUSION

by

Arthur O. Friel

Author of "The Tailed Men," "The Trumpeter," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

THREE ex-Army men, Roderick McKay, Meredith Knowlton and Timothy Ryan, arrived in Brazil to undertake a hazardous search for a certain David Dawson Rand. There had been a report that the man they were looking for was held captive by a tribe of cannibals called the Red Bones.

The result of various inquiries in the town of Remate de Males—where they had landed—made them decide to start at once up the river Javary for the Interior. They set about their preparations, and enlisted the aid of the *superintendente* of the town and also of a Herr Schwandorf who was said to know the country well.

From the beginning the behavior of the German was peculiar, and the three Americans were put on their guard. He secured a boat for them, however, and Peruvian paddlers—with whom it soon appeared they would have trouble.

After an uneventful trip of fifteen days the party met a canoe manned by Brazilian rubber-workers. At once a quarrel sprang up between the crews of the two boats, and Knowlton came to blows with Francisco, one of his paddlers, before it could be stopped.

Several nights later while the camp slept, Francisco, knife in hand, attempted to murder Knowlton. The assailant was caught in time; but immediately a general fight with the Peruvians broke out. Only Jose, the *puntero*, remained faithful.

Meantime, back in Iquitos, Schwandorf telegraphed to the American agents of the searching expedition that its members had all been murdered.

THE three men from the north resumed their journey and presently reached a Brazilian settlement, the *seringal* of Coronel Nunes. There they were well received, although the enmity between Jose and their hosts caused much embarrassment. The *coronel* entertained his new friends, and they related the circumstances of their trip to him. When the account was done the double dealing of Schwandorf became amazingly clear; and Jose, for one, swearing vengeance, started back at once for Remate de Males.

After a stay of several days, the Americans decided to push on. They secured from the *coronel* the services of two of his best men, and were given information regarding the difficulties to come. The party then continued on up the river until they arrived at a place where the guides said that they had once seen the Raposa—a native name for the wild-man thought to be the missing Rand. Here they all landed. The plan was to visit a tribe of Mayorunas and to make friends with them if possible. In this way it was believed something could be learned of the Raposa.

By the efforts of their two Brazilians the searchers located several savages who agreed to take the strangers to their chief. The journey now promised to be dangerous, for the warriors were very hostile and might at any time prove treacherous. By accident one of them, through his own carelessness, was wounded by a poisoned arrow. McKay, having some medical knowledge, quickly undertook to save his life. The experiment was successful and resulted in great good fortune for the expedition—as was soon shown.

THE party, in company with Yuara, the wounded man, and his fellow-tribesmen at last reached the *maloca* of chief Suba. Its reception was incredibly hostile; something had gone decidedly wrong. Yuara endeavored to straighten out matters—but in vain. Judging from the curious behavior of the natives, McKay, with his heavy beard, seemed to offend them in some way.

However McKay informed Suba that he wished to make a visit to Monitaya, chief of a large tribe of Mayorunas near by. This request was immediately granted, and the expedition resumed its journey forthwith.

On arriving at the village ruled by Monitaya, the Americans were surprized to find themselves subjected to continued unfriendliness. Finally two savages came out to inspect McKay and pronounced a favorable decision to their chief. At once everything was changed, and the visitors were royally entertained. It was afterwards explained that the

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tribesmen had mistaken the strange white man for Schwandorf because the two were said to resemble one another. The German had been up to villainy among them and they had determined to kill him once he fell into their hands.

Monitaya was now told of the search for the Raposa and his probable captivity among the Red Bones. The good chief promised to help with guides and a guard of picked warriors. They were all about to start out once more when Tim fell sick with fever and had to be left behind.

The Red Bones were a truculent people of low intelligence, and when the Americans, after a march of four days, arrived in their midst they had much trouble gaining an interview with chief Umanuh. McKay asked to see the Raposa; the Red Bone denied any knowledge of him, but presently relented and declared that the missing man would be handed over in exchange for many presents.

McKay and his friends withdrew to the farther side of a small river, which ran close by, to wait till the following morning. During the night Knowlton kept watch against a surprize attack. All at once he heard a curious noise. A man was coming—coming on all fours like an animal. Knowlton brought his gun-butt crashing down upon the invader's head. He struck a light. At his feet lay the Raposa.

CHAPTER XXI

SHADOWS OF THE NIGHT

"ROD! Wake up!"

The tense whisper aroused McKay instantly. With one sweep of the arm his net was torn aside and he leaped out with pistol drawn.

"Right, Merry. What is it?"

"We've got him! Look!"

The electric ray again streaked the gloom. The astounded captain did not drop his gun, but he came near it. For a long minute he stood as in a trance. When he attempted to holster his weapon he fumbled three times for the sheath before he found it.

"Whew!" he breathed. "Have you killed him?"

"Nope—don't think so—Lord, I hope not! Now that I think of it, I did give him a mighty solid smash. Used the butt. He was crawling in here, and naturally I didn't stop to ask for his card. Feel his head."

McKay complied. His exploring fingers found only a huge bump under the thick hair.

"No, his skull's whole. Didn't even split the scalp. You crowned him hard, but unless he got concussion he's still useful. His nose-bleed comes from hitting the ground, I think. Turn off the light. Are you still on guard?"

"Yes. The Brazilians are out."

"Take a turn and see that all's clear. Can't tell what might break any minute now. Leave your flash here."

Passing the flat nickel light-box to the captain, Knowlton retrieved his gun from the ground and resumed his patrol. Slight as the disturbance had been, uneasiness was in the air. The savages on the far shore were up, peering at the *tambo* and muttering to one another. Measuring the distance, the lieutenant saw that though they had undoubtedly seen the flashlight switched on and off and made out the movements of men, they could not have discerned what lay on the ground beyond the hammocks. Nearer at hand, Tucu and a couple of the Mayorunas were awake and looking out. But the sight of the sentinel strolling up and down in apparent unconcern and the absence of light in the *tambo* gradually quieted the suspicions on both sides of the water. Soon the Red Bones squatted again and the Mayorunas lay back with minds at ease.

Then a dim sheen of light showed for a time at the back of the white men's shelter, fading out after a few minutes into the usual gloom. McKay had pulled a blanket over himself and the unconscious man, masking his torch-glare from any watching eye while he studied the face and form of the invader. After the faint radiance vanished certain small sounds came to the sentry's ears. Then McKay's tall figure loomed in the vague moonshine. Knowlton stopped beside him.

"It's Rand," the captain vouchsafed in an undertone. "No question of it. Features identical, though face is drawn. White hair-mark, broken nose, green eyes—I opened one eye. Got a bad foot, partly healed—looks as if he'd torn it on a stub. Poor devil seems nearly starved."

"So? Then that's why he sneaked in like that—wanted to steal some grub. Those mutts over yonder probably haven't fed him since he got hurt."

"That's it. He's had to do his own foraging, and his foot has given him mighty little chance. —— those brutes!"

"Right! But now what? Look out that he doesn't sneak away again."

"He won't. I tied his feet. He's in Pedro's hammock, still dead to the world. If he wakes up and starts to yell I'll gag

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him. We've got to get away now as soon as we can."

"How?"

"Don't know. By water, perhaps. Wish those bushmen were here. Haven't heard any noise over there, have you?"

"All quiet. They're safe—or dead."

"Hm! Confounded foolishness anyway. But we've no means of getting out until they're back. Couldn't desert them, besides. What time is it?"

"Ten-thirty. You go on watch at midnight."

"I'm on watch now, inside. They may be back any time. If they don't show up in the next couple of hours I'll send Tucu to find out why. We'll have to get those canoes over here, too. Water leaves no trail."

He turned back into the hut, leaving Knowlton figuring chances. To obtain those canoes was a man-sized job. To put the Red Bone guards out of action without arousing the whole tribe was an even bigger job. But no boats could be brought over until the outpost was silenced, that was sure.

Another half-hour crept past. Still no noise from the town, no suspicious move on the other shore. Then from the *tambo* itself came a low mumble of voices. Knowlton stepped swiftly into it. As noiselessly as they had gone, the two bushmen had returned.

In his usual concise phrases McKay was informing them of the capture of the Raposa. With his back to the stream and the flashlight held close to his body he played the light for an instant on the face of the still unconscious man. Then, once more in darkness, he asserted:

"Now that we have him, we must get out of here. Only chance to do that is to get the canoes. With them we can at least be away from this town by sunrise, and it will take the Red Bones just so much longer to find our trail where we take to the bush. We'll get a flying start that way. Anything else to suggest?"

"That is the best plan, *capitao*," Lourenço agreed. For the first time since the Americans had known him his voice held a note of suppressed excitement. "It is the only plan worth while. And I do not think we shall have to take to our legs soon—if at all. I believe this creek connects with that which flows past the Monitaya *malocas*. We have learned some things. *Por Deus!* If only we had known the Raposa was here!"

"Why?"

"Because then we could have brought company with us. *Senhores*, guess what the barred house holds."

"Well?"

"Women of the Mayorunas! Girls stolen from Monitaya and other settlements!"

"Jumping Judas!" ejaculated Knowlton. "Are you sure?"

"Sure, comrades! These foul Red Bones are the men who have been lurking around the Mayoruna tribe-houses and capturing girls who went into the bush. They have taken the prisoners to the water, where the trails always were lost, and there they could find hiding-places until night, then drive their canoes past the clearings and get out of that country. So there must be some water connection by which these men travel, and by which we too can travel. If we go downstream we are almost sure to find it by daylight."

"But why—what's the idea of their stealing the girls? For victims? If so, how are the girls still alive?"

"Do you not see, *senhor*?" Pedro broke in impatiently. "Did not Umanuh ask if we would pay more than the other Black Beard for the Raposa? What other Black Beard?"

"Schwandorf!" the Americans blurted simultaneously.

"Not so loud! Schwandorf, of course. Umanuh works with the German. He catches girls by stealth and sells them to the German to add to his slave-gangs. While the Mayorunas all blame the Peruvians for the disappearances, Umanuh works unsuspected. He is holding these women until Schwandorf comes again—and it may be that Schwandorf is not far off at this moment. Now that we have come seeking the wild man, Umanuh at once thinks of selling him also; and he wonders whether we or Schwandorf will pay the more for him."

"By thunder, I believe you're right!" Knowlton coincided. "He's stalling for time, holding us here while Schwandorf comes up, I'll bet. No wonder he and his men are wary of the Mayorunas—they thought we'd come to snoop around and catch 'em with the goods. You fellows must have done a mighty slick job to find out this stuff without getting caught. Isn't the house guarded at night?"

"Indeed it is. Two clubmen are there

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now, and there is only the one door. Not even a window. But Lourenço worked a small hole between two logs at the back while I watched the clubmen, and through the hole he whispered with one of the women inside. If only we had known the wild man was here we could have jumped the guards and tried to bring back the women. But of course your business about the Raposa had to be thought of first, so all we could do was to tell them friends were here."

FOR a few seconds there was the silence of thought. Then Knowlton chuckled.

"I'll say we have our hands full this night. Now we not only have to get ourselves and Rand out of here but also rescue the fair damsels from the clutches of the ogre. 'Twon't do to leave them here while we go back to Monitaya and get the rest of his army. By the time we could come back they'd be gone—one way or another. What's done has to be done now or never."

"Right!" McKay commended. "We'll have to save the women, of course. Question is—how?"

Lourenço answered at once.

"My idea, *capitao*, is this: We two will return. With us we will take Tucu. The three of us can handle those guards quietly. We must have Tucu, because the women do not know us and might balk at the last moment—women are queer creatures and these might think themselves safer inside prison walls than following two strange men through the night; but Tucu can handle them. When once we are clear of the house Tucu can lead the women to the bank above here, and we shall try for the canoes. Then it will be fast work to get away, but if we have good fortune it can be done."

"Confound it, you fellows are taking all the risks! Can't you take more men——"

"No. No man but Tucu. He has a cool head. These others, if they knew, would go blood-mad and attack the Red Bones to avenge their lost women, and so would get us all killed. Now I will talk with Tucu."

He slipped into the Mayoruna shelter and returned with the cannibal leader, whom he led to the far side of the *tambo* before speaking. Then, in whispers which the other tribesmen could not overhear, he explained the situation. Knowlton took another turn or two along his post, finding that the Red Bones across the water were stirring about and evidently aware that something was going on; but they made no move either to get into a canoe or to send a man to the houses beyond. As he stopped again at the corner near the whispering pair he heard Tucu grinding his teeth, and as the savage turned his face toward the Red Bone outpost it was a mask of murder. But he spoke no word as he slipped back to his own men.

"He will wake another man and tell him what to do," Lourenço explained. "But only we four shall know of the women until they are freed. Will one of you lend Tucu a machete? He may need a weapon and he can not carry his big bow on this trip."

A few minutes later the three crept out behind the *tambo*, Tucu gripping McKay's machete. As a final word Lourenço said:

"Our men here may move about a little after a time, but do not try to keep them quiet. It is a part of the plan."

With that he was gone. Listen as they might, the Americans could hear no sound to indicate that three men now were traversing the black tangle beyond.

McKay took up his rifle and assumed the sentry work. Knowlton sat in his hammock, grateful for the chance to rest his weary legs. From the hammock where the Raposa lay no sound came. With a worried frown the lieutenant leaned over him and laid hand on his heart. After awhile he sat up again in relief.

"Lord, I sure knocked him cold!" was his thought. "But he's still with us, and there's no use in reviving him now; the less noise over here the better. Hope I didn't jar his brains loose altogether—he might wake up as a murderous maniac. Poor devil! A millionaire, yet half-starved and more than half-nutty."

He glanced out at the dim scene before the hut. The moon now had journeyed so far westward that the creeping shadows of the tall trees had moved out almost to the creek, and the two crude shelters and the sentinel were surrounded by dense gloom. The Red Bone men opposite must rely on their ears alone hereafter, for they could not see through this darkness. McKay was visible enough to his own party, but not to the enemy. The blond man in the hammock watched the somber figure of his comrade, followed the flight of a big firefly whose light floated near, thought of the two bushmen out in the dark, and looked again at the still form of Rand.

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"Drifters all," he soliloquized. "The fireflies and Rod and Tim and I and those Brazilian daredevils—all floating around because we can't keep still, and never getting anywhere. And you, you silly-ass Rand, have a mint waiting for you up home, and we have to come find you and lead you up there and shove your nose into it. And if you get your brains back you'll be a nine-days newspaper wonder and a hero of the jungle and all that, and the girls will all tumble over you—because you've got a couple of millions in your sock.

"And we fellows who yanked you out of hell by the left hind leg can pocket our pay and go jump off the dock for all anybody cares. Ho-hum! All the same, I'd rather be me than you, old thing. Free to drift and able to handle myself. You can have the money and the moths that hang around it."

With which he yawned, squinted again at the sinister figures squatting out yonder in the moonshine, arose, and made himself useful. Working very quietly, he took down three of the hammocks, rolled them up, laid them at the corner nearest the creek; made up the packs by sense of touch and placed them and the rifles of the absent pair in the same place. Then he lifted the Raposa from the one remaining hammock, laid him on the packs, rolled up the hammock itself and put it under the unconscious man's head. If given time when the crisis came, he meant to save all the equipment. If not, Rand lay where he could be grabbed without delay.

Before he completed the work he became aware that the Mayorunas all were awake. Not only awake, but moving stealthily about, as Lourenço had predicted. McKay also knew it and stepped back into the hut, where Knowlton told him what he had done. But so softly did the men of Monitaya move that the Red Bone watchers showed no sign of alarm. Both the Americans observed, however, that the cannibals across the stream had their heads together and that occasionally one looked up at the little moon.

"Get that, Rod? They're waiting for the shadows to crawl over there and cover them and the water. They know that then we can't see what they're up to. I'm betting they intend to pull some dirty work after that."

"Yep. But intention and accomplishment are two different birds. Wonder what these Mayorunas are fixing to do. Wish I could talk their language."

"Tucu evidently left orders for them to get up at a certain time, but why I don't know. We'd better let them alone."

The shadow-line passed out upon the water, slipping by infinitesimal gradations across its mirror surface. The Mayorunas had become quiet. The whites waited in silent suspense for they knew not what. Far out in the forest a jaguar gave his coughing roar at intervals. Little by little the Red Bone men arose from their squat until they stood erect. A tense stillness held both forces. And the shadows crawled on—on—and reached the farther bank.

THEN a Red Bone man shoved his head forward, squinting up-stream as if he had heard something in the rank grass. He began to move softly in that direction. At that moment, from the water's edge a little above the camp, sounded a loud hiss.

Before the sound died a sudden thrum of bow-cords filled the air. A whisper of five-foot shafts speeding over the water—a rapid fire series of tiny impacts—a couple of short groans—the thumps of falling bodies—and the Red Bone outpost was no more. Shot through and through by the deadly war-arrows of the Mayorunas, they were dead before they struck the ground. And from the men of Monitaya sounded one short, subdued "Hah!" of savage satisfaction.

Up from the ground where that hiss had sounded rose a tall figure which waved its arms and danced about in impromptu signals. Then it ran for the canoes. Out from the gloom up-stream other figures took shape, running fast for the same point. With one simultaneous movement Knowlton and McKay seized the Raposa and rushed with him to the stream.

"*Senhores!*" sounded Pedro's voice, low but tense, across the water. "Be ready!"

"Ready and waiting!" snapped McKay. "Who are those people? Your women?"

"*Si.* We are not discovered——"

Across his words smote a long shrill yell from the town.

"*Por Deus!* We *are* discovered! Get our rifles, for the love of *Deus Padre!*"

He leaped into a canoe, drove it headlong across and dived for the *tambo*. Behind him the other figures dashed panting up to

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the landing. Tucu's voice rasped in swift commands. The fugitives swarmed into other dugouts. The Mayoruna men, still ignorant of the identity of these new people but assured by Tucu's voice and manner that they were not enemies, lowered their weapons and rushed for the water. Up in the town the yelling swiftly grew into a roar, and running figures came pelting toward the creek.

The canoes struck the bank. Some were partly filled, some empty and in tow. Into Pedro's canoe the whites bundled the Raposa, while the Mayorunas got into anything within reach. Lourenço appeared from nowhere and urged the Americans to open fire. As he spoke, arrows thudded into the ground and the water.

"Take this man and go!" rasped McKay. "We're losing our equipment, but——"

His rifle leaped to his shoulder. Flame spat from it. From the van of the charging Red Bones shrilled a death-scream.

Again and again the captain's gun cracked. Knowlton's joined in. Before their rifles grew silent the blunt roar of Pedro's repeater broke out. And with the emptying of their long guns the Americans drew their short ones, and in a concerted ripping crash the forty-fives volleyed death and dismay into the oncoming cannibals.

The rush was checked. For a few seconds the Red Bones wavered and milled about. Into their mass poured a cloud of arrows and blow-gun darts from the silent but no less deadly weapons of the Mayorunas. As the whites paused to reload, Pedro opened a new blast from Lourenço's rifle, which his comrade had passed to him on the run. Lourenço was not shooting, but working madly and alone to save the equipment. And, thanks to the renewed deadly fire of the guns, he saved it.

Before the wicked belch of the three rifles and the two automatics the Red Bones gave gave back more and more. Their arrows plunged all around the fighting men, but they fell at random, for the gunmen and the canoes were virtually invisible in the deep shadows. Down-stream Tucu's harsh voice jarred in commands as he straightened out the line of boats.

At the next lull in the firing Lourenço panted:

"In, comrades! We are loaded. In!"

"Great guns! Are you still here?" snapped McKay. "I told you——"

"In! Talk later. Come!"

The three gunfighters swiftly obeyed. With a powerful heave Lourenço sent the canoe after the others. Americans, Brazilians, and the Raposa hunched up among the packs, all went sliding down a jungle Styx.

A moment later the Red Bone warriors, taking heart from the cessation of firing, poured an avalanche of arrows into the spot where they had been. And as the canoe, last in the escaping line, was swallowed up in the impenetrable blackness of the forest a hair-raising screech of diabolical fury blended with a swift succession of splashes back where the cannibals were plunging headlong into the stream to reach the dead or wounded men whom they vainly hoped to find on the farther shore.

"I told you," McKay fumed, "to take this man and go! By disobeying orders you risked losing him."

"Oh, pipe down, Rod!" remonstrated Knowlton. "If they had, where'd we be now? This was the last canoe."

"*Si.* It is so," added Lourenço, his voice hard-edged. "As it is, the man and the equipment and you also are here. And let me tell you this, *Capitao* McKay, whether you like it or not: Pedro and I would see this wild man and a million others like him in a hotter place than this before we would abandon fighting comrades."

To which McKay, finding no adequate answer, made none whatever.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SIREN OF WAR

LIKE a fleet manned by sightless sailors the line of boats blundered on through the blackness. With no guiding light, the canoes bumped the banks and collided with one another in perilous confusion. Speed was impossible, yet speed was imperative. Knowlton and his little flashlight solved the problem.

"Say, fellows, let's take the lead," he suggested. "This little light isn't much, but it's something, and there are some extra batteries in my haversack when this burns out. We can see a little way ahead and pass back the word to the rest. What say?"

"*Na terra dos cegos quem tem um olho é rei*—in blind-man's land he who has one eye is king," said Pedro. "That little white

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eye in your box may save us all. Lourenço, tell those ahead to let us pass."

Without question the preceding dugouts swerved and the boat of the white men slipped by. At the head of the line they found Tucu and his crew struggling manfully to make progress without wrecking the whole fleet at the turns. Vast relief and instant acceptance of the new leadership followed Lourenço's explanation. At once the floating column began to pick up speed. And it was well that it did.

Howls of baffled hate came faintly through the tree-mass from the Red Bone town. Some time later more yells of rage sounded much nearer—back at a place on the creek which the last boat had cleared only a few minutes previously. Some of the Umanuh men had made torches and run along one of the Red Bone trails to a bend in the stream, only to find the water bare of everything but dying ripples.

Whether the enemy attempted to follow in canoes the escaping party never knew, for none succeeded in overtaking the rearmost boat. And after that one snarling uproar on the creek-bank they heard no more of the land pursuit. The narrow margin of safety gained by the aid of the flashlight proved enough to give a commanding lead, and from that time on the only obstacles to their retreat were those of darkness and winding waters.

Hour after hour Knowlton squatted in the extreme bow, picking out the turns and snags just ahead and passing the word back to Lourenço, who, in the stern, steered in accordance with his orders and relayed the course to Tucu, just behind. Amidships Pedro and McKay plied steady paddles and the Raposa lay all but forgotten on the baggage. There were no halts. If any boat back in the blackness got into difficulties it extricated itself as best it could, unaided by the rest, and fell into a new place in the column.

At last a wan light, which was scarcely a light but rather a lessening of the density, came about the stream. The renewed racket of birds and beasts announced that up overhead the sky had paled into dawn. Slowly the nearest tree-trunks began to take shape in the void and presently the shoreline became visible to all eyes. At the same time Knowlton's tiny lamp dimmed and faded out.

"Another battery gone," he announced, opening the case and dropping its contents into the creek. "Ho-yo-ho-hum! Gee, I'm all in! Eyes feel like a couple of burnt holes. Well, gents, I move that at the first available spot we go ashore, feed our faces, look at the ladies, and perform our morning salute to Umanuh—said salute consisting of applying the right thumb to the end of the nose and snappily twiddling four fingers."

"Motion carried." McKay's set face relaxed. Then, his glance dropping to the Raposa, it tightened again. "Oh, hullo, Rand. How you feeling?"

The unconscious man was unconscious no longer. Moreover, his expression was not that of one just emerging from a stupor and bewildered as to his surroundings. Though he had made no movement to change his position, his eyes indicated that he had been awake for some time. They dwelt steadily on McKay, then strayed past the captain to Pedro, Lourenço and the first Mayoruna crew following a few feet behind. His face was inscrutable and he spoke no word.

"You're with friends. Understand? Friends. You're going home. These Indians are friends too. Get that? *Friends!*"

The green eyes hung on McKay's face again; but, as before, no answer came in word, movement or expression.

"No go, Rod," said Knowlton, who could not see the rescued man's face but watched McKay's. "'Fraid I knocked his last brains down his throat. Dead from the neck up."

"I don't know about that. He doesn't look vacant. See here, Rand. We're going to land and eat. Eat! You hungry? Uh-huh. Thought you'd understand that. He's alive, Merry. Maybe not all here, but enough to get us."

"Good!"

The blond man turned his attention down-stream again. Soon he suggested—

"How about landing at that little open space down there at the left, Lourenço?"

"Very good, *senhor*. It looks dry."

The canoe swerved and floated down to a spot on the left shore where bright light poured down from an opening in the overhead wall of foliage.

"Now look here, Rand," warned the captain. "We'll untie you. But if you try to duck into the bush, now or later, you get shot. Shot! Understand?

He tapped his pistol, and the gray eyes

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boring into the green ones were hard as chilled steel. For the first time Rand responded—a slow, short nod.

McKay cut the cord around the wild man's ankles, then stepped ashore and held out a hand. Rand arose quietly, jumped to the earth unassisted, lifted his bad foot, and stared at it, then limped onward into a spot where the sun now shone bright and warm and sat down to bask.

"Have to fix that foot, I expect," yawned Knowlton. "But my eyes right now are one solid ache, and I'm going to rest them. Watch him, will you, Rod? Can't tell what he might do. Of course you wouldn't shoot him, but——"

"Wouldn't I? Not to kill, no. But if he makes one break I'll drill a leg for him. He's going to the States!"

"Sure. I'm with you all the way. Now beat it and let me repose myself."

He bathed his eyes, then lay down in the canoe with a wet handkerchief across them. Pedro and Lourenço already were ashore and raiding the slender packs for food. The Mayorunas were debarking and watching each new boat as it drew up, their eyes on the women who had wielded paddles with them but whose faces they now saw clearly for the first time. In the shaft of sunlight McKay stood tall and forbidding, rifle in the crook of one arm, hat pulled low, guarding the gaunt man at his feet and viewing the landing of the expedition.

THE women, all young, numbered eleven. Their skins looked slightly pallid, their eyes too big and black, their faces somewhat drawn—the results of close confinement and anxiety; but none showed any sign of abuse. For commercial reasons alone, Umanuh had seen to it that the woman-flesh he held for sale should remain uninjured. Now, saved from the slave-trail or worse, the girls showed no more emotion than if on a mere journey after turtles or fish. A few spoke to men whom they evidently knew. Others gathered in a dumb cluster and awaited whatever might come next. With these Tucu talked in gruff monosyllables.

When all were ashore, a dozen of the men went into the jungle to hunt. The others sought firewood, inspected weapons, talked with one another and with the girls, who stared at McKay and asked who he was. A number of the warriors looked sourly at Rand, whose face still bore the Red Bone tribal streaks which now, to Mayoruna minds, was the insignia of the enemy. All knew he was the man who had been sought, all saw that he was not a Red Bone but a white man; yet their mental reaction to the sight of the sinister red cross on the forehead and the straight cheek-lines was rabidly hostile.

McKay, all-seeing, decided to wash Rand's face for him before journeying much farther. But Rand himself gave no sign that he either knew or cared what the feeling of the Mayorunas might be. Utterly impassive, he stared back at them.

Then one of the women pointed at him and said something to Tucu. The tall watch-dog's jaw set a little harder as he awaited the effect. Somewhat to his surprise, Tucu and a couple of the other men now gave Rand a more friendly look. Soon afterward Tucu passed Lourenço, who talked with him a few minutes. Catching the Brazilian's eye, the captain motioned him nearer and asked for any news.

"Tucu says, *capitao*, that most of these girls are from *malocas* other than that of Monitaya, though some of Monitaya's women also are here. And one of them says this man, the Raposa, tried to release them a short time ago and was nearly killed by the Red Bones for it. They let him live only because he is crazy, and they fear to kill a crazy man."

"What! He tried to get them clear?"

"Yes. He opened the door and motioned for them to run, but before they could escape they were caught. He was badly beaten. You will remember that he was hiding behind that same house when Pedro and Senhor Knowlton saw him. Perhaps he meant to try again."

"Hm! Crazy and wild, but a white man for all that. How did you manage to free the women?"

"Very simple," was the cool answer. "We stabbed the guards, opened the door, and came back to the creek with the women."

"Just like that, eh? And the guards made no resistance, I suppose?"

"Not much," grinned the bushman. "They were not allowed to."

"I see. Very simple, as you say. About as simple as our calm and unhurried departure."

"Something like that, *capitao*. What do

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you desire for breakfast—salt fish and coffee, or coffee and salt fish?"

"A little of everything, thanks. Here comes some monkey-meat, too."

The first of the hunters had returned, bringing two big red howlers. Others drifted in at intervals, and not one returned empty-handed; for here in the virgin jungle the game was plentiful, particularly at this early hour. Soon the air was heavy with the odor of broiling meat, and from the fire of the Brazilians the fragrance of coffee was wafted to the nostrils of the recumbent Knowlton. He arose, swallowing fast.

"Gee, I'm half drowned!" was his humorous complaint. "The smell of eats makes my mouth water so that I have to gasp for air. Must tickle your nose too, eh, Rand, old top?"

Rand, famished though he was, gave no sign of assent or of hunger. In fact, he gave no sign of anything. Stoically he sat, eyes front.

"By thunder, the man's got pride!" the lieutenant added in a lower tone. "Almost ready to keel over from lack of food, but stiff as a cigar-store Indian. Darned if I'm not beginning to respect him!"

Tucu approached, carrying two big monkey-haunches. One he offered to McKay, the other to Rand. The latter's immobility vanished in a flash. With a lightning grab he seized the proffered meat and sank his teeth in it. As he wolfed down the tough flesh the three men standing over him exchanged glances. Tucu laid a hand on his stomach and pressed inward, signifying that the man had long gone hungry. The others nodded. Then they split the other haunch between them and fell to gnawing.

Lourenço, bringing coffee to the captain, asked Tucu in what direction the Moñitaya houses lay. Without hesitation the Indian pointed off to the left. The Brazilian glanced at the creek, estimating its general direction and rate of flow, then returned to his fire.

Offered coffee, Rand took it and sipped it with evident relish. Likewise he accepted a cigaret, which he puffed like a man just learning to smoke—or one who has not smoked for years. For his meat, his drink, and his smoke he gave no indication of gratitude. His attitude was as indifferent and matter-of-fact as if he were one of the Mayorunas. When his smoke was ended he began inspecting his bad foot.

"Let's see that," said Knowlton, dropping on one knee. "Looks pretty sore. Yes, it's more than sore; it's infected. How'd you get it, anyway?"

No answer. Knowlton probed his face keenly. Rand straightened out his legs, wriggled his toes, and scowled.

"Queer!" muttered the lieutenant, rising. "He looks as if he actually didn't know how he got that wound. You'd think he'd remember that much anyhow. I sure am afraid his head is all scrambled up."

He went to the canoe, returned with his meager medical kit, and knelt again.

"Now listen here, Rand. I don't know how well you understand me, but I'm taking the chance. This foot has to be opened up and cleaned out. Otherwise you're going to have serious trouble with it. I'm going to hurt you. If you raise a row you'll get an anesthetic—a swift punch under the ear. Better sit still and make no fuss."

With which he went to work. He did a thorough job, and there was no doubt that it hurt. But Rand gave no trouble, nor even a sign of pain—except that he dug his fingers into the dirt.

"Good boy!" the amateur surgeon approved, when he finished. "You're a Spartan, if you happen to remember what that is. Now we'll move on. But before we go, wash your face good and hard. Get that tribe-paint off. These Indians with us don't like it. You're no Indian anyhow—you're white, like us. Savvy? White man—wash off paint!"

He rolled up his kit and returned to the canoe. The Mayorunas, men and women, were entering their own craft. Rand sat motionless a moment, McKay and the Brazilians watching him keenly. Slowly then he got up of his own accord, limped to the water's edge, and began to scrub his face.

When he desisted the marks still showed, for the red dye clung stubbornly to his skin; but they were fainter than before. The other men eyed him thoughtfully, none speaking. He settled himself in his former place, curled up, and began to doze.

"A queer fish!" Pedro said softly. "Is he crazy or not?"

"Hanged if I know," replied McKay. "He's no maniac anyhow. I'd give real money to know just what his mental condition is. But we can forget him for awhile. I'm going to let you fellows sleep by turns now. I had some sleep last night, you've

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had none at all. Merry, your eyes need rest. You curl up in the bow and snooze one hour. Then another man, and so on. And how about letting Tucu lead the parade again?"

"Excellent, *capitao!* I was thinking of that."

Lourenço talked with Tucu, who swung out into the current. The boat of the white men followed, then the others. At a steady cruising speed the brigade surged on downstream.

KNOWLTON'S allotted hour passed. Pedro took his place and was instantly asleep. In turn he was aroused and Lourenço laid down his paddle. But just then Tucu's canoe slowed and floated in to the left bank.

The others backed water and looked at a very narrow ravine—almost a cleft—in a rising hillside. Through it led a lane of water. From the third boat, in which were two women of the Monitaya tribe, now came voices carrying information to the Indian leader. At once he turned his boat into the cleft.

"This is the connection we have been seeking," Lourenço explained. "The women say the boats of their captors came through this crack in the hill. At the other end we shall find the creek of Monitaya."

The women spoke truth. After threading their way along the weedy water-path, which was barely wide enough to give passage for the boats, they emerged at a slant into another stream. Down this, with the sure instinct for direction of the hereditary jungle-dweller, Tucu turned his prow without asking the women whether to go with or against the current. Once more on the waters of their home creek, the Mayorunas quickened their strokes and bowled merrily on toward their *malocas*.

Lourenço took his nap and resumed his place. Hour after hour the fleet sped on. Noon passed without a halt, the paddlers munching at whatever fragments remained from breakfast.. By turns the Americans and Brazilians each got another hour's sleep, McKay consenting to relax when all his mates had rested. Rand dozed and awoke at intervals, seeming content and comfortable despite his cramped position.

By four o'clock even the Mayorunas began to lag in their strokes. Excluding the halt at sunrise, they now had been journeying for fifteen hours, in the last nine of which they had covered many miles of serpentine water. The heat of the day and the constant drive of the paddles had taken their toll, and now the body of every man fiercely demanded more food. McKay, knowing that in jungle travel distance is not a matter of miles but of hours, had begun to figure that the journey which had taken nearly five days of overland work might be completed that night by the swiftly moving canoes. But now, recognizing the signs of exhaustion, he realized that without some powerful spur the Indians would not attempt to reach the home *malocas* until the morrow.

Then the spur came. Even as Tucu began scanning the shores for a good campsite, he and every other Mayoruna suddenly ceased paddling and threw up his head. Faint and far, a xylophonic call of beaten wooden bars rapped across the jungle, rising and falling in swift regular cadence —a sirenical flow and ebb of sound-waves. Over and over it undulated, rapid, incessant, imperative.

A chorus of excited grunts broke from the canoe brigade. The dugout of Tucu leaped away like a roweled horse. Lourenço and Pedro buried their paddles in mighty strokes, hurling their boat ahead to keep from being run down by those behind.

Lourenço barked at Tucu, who flung back an answer.

"What is it?" demanded McKay.

"Paddle hard, *capitao!* If we do not keep up we shall be wrecked. That message is the war-call of the Mayorunas—calling in the hunters from the forest to take arms against an enemy. We must race now with these madmen around us, or we go under. Paddle!"

CHAPTER XXIII

STRATEGY

IN THE last light of the fast-fading day the canoes darted from the forest into the clearing where stood the Monitaya *malocas*.

Long before their arrival the siren call had ceased, but there had been no lessening of speed by the racing dugouts. On the contrary, the last long mile had been covered in a final desperate spurt, the paddles swinging in swift unison to the accompaniment of a ferocious chant of one syllable:

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"Hough! Hough! Hough!" This explosive cadence had echoed down the stream ahead of them; and now, as the panting crews emerged from the jungle, they found themselves flanked by a long line of their fellow warriors, bristling with drawn arrows and ready spear-points. But of the enemy whose presence that great xylophone had betokened there was no sign.

At sight of the familiar feather-bonnets of their own men the tense Monitayans let their weapons slowly sink. And when Tucu, leaping ashore, gaspingly demanded news of the fight the line dissolved into a mob which rushed to welcome him and his mates. In the first few breaths it was learned that no fight had yet taken place, but that all the warriors had been brought in and ordered to prepare to march at the next sunrise; and that the sudden war-call had been sent out as the result of the arrival of a stranger.

Then the crowd parted, and through it came striding two men whose appearance caused the white men to erupt into hoarse shouts of greeting. One, whose hard face swiftly relaxed into a half-smile of relief, was the great chief himself. The other, whose jutting jaw suddenly dropped and whose blue eyes opened in incredulity, was Tim: Tim, once more strong and florid and aggressive, gripping his rifle, astounded at the sight of his comrades standing there alive and alert. They soon learned why.

Dropping his gun, he sprang at them with an inarticulate roar of welcome. He wrung their hands, pounded their shoulders, laughed, cried, swore, all at once. Then he burst out:

"Glory be! Ye're alive, homelier'n ever and tough as tripe! We thought ye was wiped out sure! We was all set to start in the mornin' and pull them Red Bones to pieces. Mebbe we'll do it yet, too. How'd ye break through? Did ye kill Sworn-off and his gang?"

"Schwandorf? Gang? Haven't seen anybody but Red Bones—though we sure saw plenty of them," replied Knowlton. "What are you talking about?"

"Then ye missed him by about one point windage. When'd ye leave? Last night? I bet he's there by now. Gee, where'd ye git them girls? And who's this guy? Great gosh, is he the Raposy? Wal, for the love o' Mike——"

"Tim!" broke in McKay. "What's all this about? Now wait. This is the Raposa. These girls are Mayoruna women held prisoners by the Red Bones. We got them last night and lit out in the middle of a general engagement. Now open up with your news."

"Right, cap. We got a visitor today—old friend of ourn—li'l old Hozy, the only white guy in that Peruvian crew we had. He's all dolled up like an Injun: shaved face, tribe-paint, and so on. He come through the Injun country that way—I dunno yet how he done it, him bein' a Peruvian and all—but he got through, and he says Sworn-off and a whole gang of bad eggs is back here to git this Raposy guy and all the girls they can lay hands on too. He says Sworn-off's got them Red Bones workin' for him, and you fellers must be massacred sure by now.

"Good thing I was here when he come, or he'd be cut up and in the stew-pot. Monitaya's a good skate, but he sure is poison to anything Peruvian, and soon as Hozy begun to try to talk he got wise and dang near bumped him off. I got him to cool down some, and he believes Hozy's tellin' the truth, but even at that they got Hozy tied up like a dog. Come look at him."

But it was necessary to wait a while for Tucu and Lourenço to tell Monitaya the tale of what had taken place; for the chief demanded immediate and full details, and not until he had them would he return to his *maloca* and his hammock throne. By that time the little moon was again ruler of the sky and the keen hunger of the voyagers had grown ravenous. Followed by the rescued and the rescuers, he then stalked into the tribal house and to his usual place, where he commanded that food be brought.

On the ground, directly in front of the chief's hammock, sat a gaunt, painted Indian around whose neck was a stout noose, the other end of the cord being held by a muscular savage whose skull-smashing club was gripped loosely in his other fist. As the whites reached them the noosed man's face cracked in a grin.

"Greetings, *señores*," said the voice of Jose. "You will pardon me for remaining seated, yes? The man behind me is itching for an excuse to crush my head."

"Jose!" exclaimed both Knowlton and McKay. Though Tim had said Jose was "tied like a dog," they had not thought to find the expression literal truth. The sight

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angered them, and they turned to Lourenço.

"Tell Monitaya we want this man freed!" McKay snapped. At his peremptory tone the cannibal chieftain looked oddly at him; and when Lourenço translated the demand —though in a more diplomatic manner—he scowled. But he gave the clubman the word and the rope was lifted from the prisoner's neck.

"*Gracias, amigos,*" he bowed. "If I still remain seated, it is because I am very weary—and I have not eaten since yesterday."

His thin face and his projecting ribs not only corroborated his simple announcement but indicated that for more than one day his food and rest had been almost nil. Naked, painted, minus his fierce mustache and flamboyant head-kerchief, he appeared a far different man from the domineering *puntero* of a short time back. But his bold black eyes, his reckless grin and his mocking tone proved him the same swashbuckling Jose, undaunted by hunger, exhaustion, or his position as prisoner of man-eaters whose enmity was implacable.

"Well, you're going to eat now, or we'll know why not!" vowed Knowlton. "We understand that you brought a warning to Monitaya. Is this his way of treating men who risk their lives to befriend him?"

Jose shrugged.

"Once an enemy, always an enemy. That is their rule. And do not think I traveled the bush and threw myself into this snake-heap from love of Monitaya. I do not care if he and all his race are blown to ——. I am here because, as I once told you, Jose Martinez never forgets. Thank you, *señor*, I will eat now and talk later."

DEFTLY he extracted a chunk of meat from a clay pot which had been placed before Knowlton and in turn tendered to him. Monitaya watched him eat, but gave no sign of disapproval; and the Americans and even the Brazilians, made an aggressive show of friendship toward the lone Peruvian for the express benefit of the chief.

They knew well that by their rescue of the Mayoruna women they had made their own position among these people virtually impregnable, and that their recognition of Jose as a friend probably would be his only bulwark. Wherefore they left no doubt in the minds of the watchers as to where he stood in their regard.

Monitaya, sitting in regal dignity, looked down upon two parties of seven feasting with famished speed—the rescued women who were not members of his own tribe, and the four Americans, two Brazilians and one Peruvian. All the others had scattered—Tucu and his band to their own family triangles, and the four Mayoruna girls to become the nuclei of feminine groups which demanded intimate accounts of their captures and treatment by the captors.

To the strange women at his feet the chief paid scant attention now, though he meant to interrogate them after their hunger was satisfied. His eyes dwelt on Rand, the strange combination of white man, Indian, and jungle demon of whom he had heard so much and on whose tanned skin the red skeleton told the tale of a "mind out of the skull." Jose and Tim, too, stared in frank curiosity at the dead-alive newcomer, whose silent composure remained totally unperturbed.

But the seven new girls, though ignored by the chief and his guests, were by no means neglected by the other men of the *maloca*, being thoroughly stared at by most of the young bucks—and, it must be confessed, by a goodly proportion of the married men also.

When at length the meal was finished Monitaya commanded the girls to stand before him and narrate their experiences. The men lighted smokes, Jose seizing the proffered cigaret with avidity, Rand accepting his with the usual odd deliberation.

"Wal, Hozy old feller, ye're in right with the chief now," asserted Tim. "Ye got all our gang with ye, and she's some l'il ol gang, I'll tell the world. This feller Renzo can talk cannibal so good he makes Monitaya hunt for the dictionary, and he'll tell the chief in ten seconds what I tried half an hour to say this afternoon—that ye belong. I ain't been here long enough to learn much o' their lingo, ye understand. If I could spout it like French, now, there wouldn't been no trouble."

McKay and Knowlton snickered. They knew Tim's French was several degrees worse than the usual American doughboy's "frog" talk.

"Good thing you couldn't," derided Knowlton. "You'd have had Jose crucified before we got here."

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"That's right, gimme the razz! Course, I did have a li'l trouble makin' some o' them frogs understand, but that was because they was so ignorant they didn't know their own language when they heard it spoke right. Anyways, ye got to admit Hozy's still with us and sassy as ever, and he wouldn't been if Timmy Ryan hadn't been round to pow-wow for him."

"You have it right, *señor*," Jose agreed gravely. "Without you I should now be dead. I can speak the Mayoruna tongue quite well, but of what use is it to talk any language when men will not listen? It was you and your gun that saved me."

"Gun? Good Lord, did you pull a gun on Monitaya?" ejaculated the lieutenant.

"Aw, no. That is—I guess mebbe I did wave me piece around while I was arguin'—I can always convince a guy better if I got somethin' in me hand. But I didn't git real rough."

"You are lucky to be still alive, Senhor Tim," said Loureçno. "If Monitaya were not the man he is you would not be alive. I am glad we have returned."

"Meanin' I need a guardeen? Say lookit here now——"

"As you were!" clipped McKay. "We're all wasting time. Jose, let's hear your report. I thought you were going to put Schwandorf out of action for good?"

"And I am, *capitan!* That is why I now here. If I had reached him immediately after leaving the Nunes place it would have been done at once. But a man travels slowly when he is alone and has lost much blood, and before I met Schwandorf again I had time to think coolly. Then when I saw him I changed my plans.

"Some days down the river I met him traveling fast in a canoe paddled by hard men whom I know. He pretended to be greatly grieved when I told him you all were dead. Oh yes, *señores*, I told him that. I was playing with him, and it amused me to see how he thought he was deceiving me when I was really fooling him. I said we were attacked by Indians a short way above the Nunes place, and that I alone escaped. Then he said something that made me decide not to kill him for a time.

"He told me he had learned that this man here—his name is Rand, yes?—that the man Rand was a bank-thief who had run away from North America, and that a reward would be paid for him. He said your real reason for coming here was that you were detectives trying to earn the reward. That is false, is it not, *señores?*"

"We're no detectives. Rand's no thief."

"Ah, so I thought. But Schwandorf often tells truth to conceal his lies, so that it is sometimes hard to know which is true and which untrue. He went on to say he had warned you not to come into this Indian country, and he was sorry you had been killed—the snake! But since you were dead we might get the money for ourselves. If we succeeded in catching the man Rand and taking him out alive I should have half the reward, or five hundred dollars.

"I saw plainly what his plan was. I might be useful to him in catching Rand if Rand was out in the bush, for I have traveled this country alone more than once and am a far better bushman than the German. But whether I got Rand or not, I never should live to demand my part of the money. I know too much about Schwandorf—things which I shall not tell now. So when the right time should come, Jose would meet with a fatal accident, such as a bullet in the back, or a knife in the throat while sleeping. But I did not let him know I saw this. I pretended to fall in with his plan like the fool he thought me to be.

"It was not Rand alone that brought him here. You have brought back Mayoruna women from the Red Bone country, so you know the Red Bones are women-stealers. And they steal for Schwandorf. You may believe me or not, *señores*, but I did not know this until the German told me. Oh yes, I knew he dealt in women, but of the Red Bone part of his business I was ignorant. As soon as I learned it I saw how I could put the illustrious Señor Schwandorf out of action, as you say, and at the same time try to save you.

"I sharpened my knife to a razor edge, deserted the German when we reached the right place, shaved with my knife, painted myself with the red and black plant dyes, and came overland to this place, thinking you would be here if still alive. But you had traveled faster than I expected and had gone into the Red Bone country, so my chance to save you seemed to have passed. I could only try to tell this chief the Red Bones were stealers of his women and that the German was with them, knowing that if he believed me he would go on the war-trail against them and kill them all. But

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if Señor Tim had not befriended me I should have died too soon to tell my tale. That is all, *señores*. Now can you spare a little more tobacco?"

They could and they promptly did. With a new cigaret glowing he lay back and looked quizzically at the women lined up before Monitaya.

"How many men has Schwandorf?" asked McKay.

"About twenty in all, *capitan*. There were eight in his crew, and they were to meet a dozen more at a place on the Peruvian side."

"All riflemen?"

"*Si*. He brought many cartridges for them. They are to raid tribe-houses of these people."

"Capture women and run them into Peru?"

"*Si*." Jose yawned as if speaking of a deal in salt fish.

THE Americans looked thoughtfully around the big house. They saw that every man near them was inspecting some kind of weapon: making sure that bow-cords were unfrayed, that arrow-heads and spear-points were firm, that the long blow-guns had received no cast from suspension and that darts were absolutely straight and true. The strong but cruel faces of the warriors were stamped with malignant hatred of the Red Bone tribe and the blackbeard who enslaved their women. The command to prepare for a march at dawn had not been withdrawn.

"We'll be expected to go too, and I'd sure like another crack at Umanuh, not to mention the Schwandorf outfit," said Knowlton, "but we have friend Rand on our hands now, and our first duty is to get him out of here safely."

"Aw, looey, have a heart! I ain't had no action since that li'l scrap down the river, and I got to have some excitement before we blow. What's more, we can't beat it now with Monitaya dependin' on us to fight on his side. He'd git sore, and I don't blame him."

HIS superior officers and the Brazilians frowned. Every man of them itched to close with the enemy in one final decisive battle. Yet—

"What'll we do with Rand?" Knowlton voiced the general thought.

The green eyes of the Raposa turned to him, rested long on his, traveled deliberately along the other faces. And then, to the utter astonishment of all, the dumb spoke.

"I'll fight," said Rand.

Speechless, the men around him stared. His face was inscrutable as ever, his eyes fathomless, his voice flat and toneless. But slowly he raised his hands as if holding a bow, twitched his right thumb and forefinger in the motion of loosing a shaft; let the hands sink. His gaze calmly lifted from theirs and dwelt on the farthest wall. Not another word did he speak.

"Begorry, there's yer answer!" triumphed Tim. "He says 'Fight!' And I bet he can sling a wicked bow and arrer, at that. Don't ye s'pose he wants a crack at them Red Bones after the way they used him?"

"I think, comrades, that the man has settled the matter for us," Pedro seconded. "None of us wants to run away and, as Tim says, we are expected to help Monitaya. We should be considered cowards, worse than dogs, if we refused. If we do not fight the Red Bones we may have to fight these Mayorunas, who now are our friends. We must stay."

McKay nodded, still studying the expressionless countenance of Rand.

"That's settled," he announced crisply. "Now, Lourenço, find out Monitaya's plan of battle."

The chief had finished his examination of the women, and Lourenço promptly put the question. Monitaya laconically replied.

"His purpose is not changed by our arrival, *capitao*. He and his men go tomorrow to attack and destroy the Red Bones. When they reach the town of Umanuh they will surround it, and all will rush in when the chief gives his yell of war."

"About what I expected. An Indian has a single-track mind always. But his strategy is rotten. Might be good enough if he had only Umanuh to deal with, but with Schwandorf in the game it's different. Ask him how he expects to protect his women while he's gone."

"He says," Lourenço reported, "that there will be no danger to the women, because his warriors will be between the women and their enemies until those enemies are dead."

"Very simple. So simple that it's foolish. He doesn't figure on the other fellow's

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mind at all; doesn't realize that a man like Schwandorf is bound to outguess him on such straightway tactics and isn't at all likely to play into his hands. But that's the exact situation. The German will outguess him, and it's up to him to outguess the German in turn.

"We'll do his guessing for him.

"Schwandorf goes into Umanuh's town, learns what's happened, finds the Red Bones frothing at the mouth, and is sore himself. He figures that we've returned here with the women, that Monitaya's men are blood-mad against the Red Bones, and that they'll do just what they are planning to do: march on Red Bone town and leave their women unprotected except by the old men, whose defensive power is negligible.

"He is in this country for the express purpose of getting girls and with Monitaya's men away from their *malocas* he has a wide-open chance to make the biggest slave-haul of his life. So he plans to outmaneuver Monitaya, attack this place, capture all the young women, allow the Red Bones to massacre every one else and burn the houses, and then move on without the loss of a man. After that perhaps he intends to find us and get Rand, or perhaps to attack other Mayoruna *malocas*. At any rate, his first objective is this place. Am I right so far?"

"Dead right," Knowlton nodded.

"Very well. Now he may figure that, having found the water connection between the two creeks, the Mayorunas will come against Umanuh by the canoe route. Or he may think they'll make the overland trip. In either case, the Red Bones have to come through the bush, for the simple reason that they haven't boats enough to carry all their force. Their canoes were rather few when we were there, and we commandeered several of them for our own use. If they decide to come part of the way in canoes they'll have to work a come-and-go transport service, bringing the fighting men down in batches to some rendezvous from which they must finish the journey on foot.

"Chances are that they'll disregard the canoes and all march overland by some route that would dodge the Mayoruna line of march. But in either case, they're coming here. And it's here, in the place where he'd not expected to be, that Monitaya should meet them. Let him fortify himself and await the assault. It will come."

"And we shall be saved many weary miles of leg-work," Jose smiled. "*Capitan*, your strategy is magnificent."

"Begorry, it ain't so bad at that," Tim approved. "Hozy, me and you will have our hammicks slung out front here when the show starts and do our shootin' prone. Suits me fine. Put it up to the chief, Renzo."

Lourenço did. Very carefully he explained it all to Monitaya, dwelling on the fact that McKay himself was a warrior chieftain and familiar with the fighting methods of such men as the atrocious blackbeard, and depicting graphically the horror of an attack by the barbarous Red Bones on the defenceless women. It took him some time to divert the chief's stubborn mind from the original plan, but in the end he succeeded.

To the vast astonishment and disappointment of the vengeful warriors, Monitaya curtly announced that the projected march would not take place. They stared as if disbelieving their ears, and more than one black look was given Lourenço. But not a man questioned the countermanding of orders, not a mutter was heard. The great chief had spoken, and his word was final.

Reluctantly they laid aside the weapons on which they had been toiling with such purposeful zeal. The chief watched them with a little smile of pride—pride in their zest for war, pride in their unquestioning acceptance of his dampening order. Then he coolly told them to continue their work; told them further that the next morning all the streams were to be poisoned, new traps set, and scouts stationed far out on every trail to await and report the approach of foes. Instantly their faces flamed again and from every quarter of the wide house rose an excited hum. They were to fight after all!

"Tough eggs, these lads, if ye ask me," yawned Tim. "Bet ye we'll see a row worth lookin' at when she does break."

He forebore to mention the fact that in rifle-power their assailants would outnumber them four to one.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE BATTLE OF THE TRIBES

THE next four days, though they were days of waiting, were busy enough to satisfy the most impatient Mayoruna warrior.

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Outposts were established on every route by which the attacking force would be likely to approach the twin *malocas*, the watchmen being given the strictest commands not to fight, nor even to allow themselves to be seen, but to run at top speed with the warning.

Poison detachments went forth to collect the ingredients for making deadly the water and the weapons. Those detailed to the work of polluting the streams gathered quantities of blue-blossomed, short-podded plants with yellow roots, the roots being pulped and thrown into the slow currents, which straightway became fatal to man or beast. The *wourali* squad procured their favorite materials and, in a flimsy shed well away from the houses, prepared a plentiful supply of the venomed brew.

New traps were set at points where a man or two might be picked off, though it was realized that these would have little effect on the final result. And inside the big houses men especially skilled in the manufacture of arrows and darts toiled swiftly and steadily from dawn till far into the night.

These activities, however, were only the usual defensive preparations made by the warriors whenever they knew a sizable body of foes was somewhere in the vicinity. It remained for the brains of the white men to devise additional features simple enough in themselves but astounding to the savages, who were accustomed only to the primitive battle tactics of their ancestors. For the first time in their lives the cannibals found themselves digging in—and also digging out.

After a survey of the terrain and a catechism of Lourenço and Monitaya as to the usual methods of attack and defense, the two officers broached an idea born of the exigencies of the situation. As they expected, the great chief was somewhat slow to approve it, for it involved a literal undermining of the walls of his fortresses. But despite the natural inflexibility of his mental processes he was an unusually intelligent savage, and eventually the patient reiteration of the advantages of the scheme won him first to assent and then almost to enthusiasm. Wherefore the amazed tribesmen were set to work, armed with crude wooden shovels, in digging holes under the logs which sheltered them from man, beast, and jungle demon.

All along the walls, at intervals marked by McKay and Knowlton, the tunnels were dug. At the same time another large gang excavated before each of the *malocas* a deep curving trench, the two long pits being separated by a ten-foot space of solid earth affording free passage from the houses to the creek.

Meanwhile the women and the older children were weaving flimsy covers from withes and vines. As soon as a tunnel was completed it was masked outside the walls by one of these covers, on which a thin layer of earth and grass was laid. The two trenches were likewise concealed, and the loose earth was carried inside the houses and packed solidly against the walls flanking the door.

At sundown of the fourth day the work was ended. And so well was it done that when the great chief, his sub-chiefs, and his foreign allies went on a final tour of inspection they could find no sign that the houses were honeycombed with exits or that the ground in front of the little entrances was not solid at all points.

"Rod and I took the idea from those pit-traps out on the trails," Knowlton explained for the dozenth time. "Holes are covered to look exactly like the rest of the ground. Every man of us has to be inside when the enemy arrives, but we have to get out quick when the right time comes, so we go under the walls. And can't you see those brave woman-stealers go kerplunk down into the trenches? Oh, boy!"

Whereat Lourenço and Jose smiled as if enjoying a secret joke. They were. For they knew something of which the Americans were not aware—that Monitaya had improved on the trench-trap idea of the whites by studding the bottom of those trenches with barbed *araya* bones smeared with *wourali*.

"Yeah, and I figger them guys'll git some jolt when these houses, which ain't got nobody in 'em but women and kids, begin to spit lead out o' loopholes and spew screechin' cannibals up out o' the ground. Gosh, I wouldn't miss seein' Sworn-off's face for a keg o' beer—and that's sayin' somethin'."

Wherein Tim expressed the general sentiment.

So ended the fourth day. When the fifth broke no man showed himself outside the walls. Except for the few outposts, every male of the Monitaya *malocas* bided within, awaiting with growing tension the

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arrival of the enemy. It was more than likely, McKay had pointed out, that the main body of the barbarous force led by Schwandorf would be preceded by a handful of scouts, and quite possible that one or more of these would slip past the outguards and spy on the tribal houses.

The sight of even one warrior would instantly apprise any such spy that the others must be near, and the word would go back at all speed to the Red Bones. Wherefore the only Monitayans to pass through the tiny doorways that morning were a few young women sent out as bait. These, naturally, took good care to stay near the entrances.

Within, the men waited at their appointed places. Each tunnel had its quota of warriors, the number being divided evenly to assure a speedy and simultaneous exit. The Americans had elected to fight from the *maloca* of the great chief, while the Brazilians and Jose were to garrison the doorway of the other house as soon as the warning came.

Rand, wordless and imperturbable as ever, now was armed with a strong bow and plenty of new arrows with unpoisoned heads; and he, of course, would remain with his own countrymen. Thus, preparations completed, all settled themselves to the interminable hours of waiting.

UPON the heaped earth near the doorway, which made the walls practically bullet-proof to a height of six feet and thus would protect the women and children, one or more of the Americans was constantly on the lookout through some inconspicuous loophole. Hour after hour dragged past, and no unusual movement or sound came to reward their vigilance.

Under the glare of the sun the roof and walls grew hot; under the silent strain of endless anticipation the impatience of the fighting men became a ferment. At length Pedro, unable to keep still, mounted to a peephole near Knowlton. Scarcely had he put his eye to the opening when both men sucked in their breath.

At the edge of the bush a man's head peered from behind a tree. And at the same moment a single canoe came creeping out of the bush and up to the landing-place. The head behind the tree was that of a Red Bone spy. The two in the small canoe were Yuara and a companion from the Suba tribe.

"Lourenço!" hoarsely whispered Pedro. "Yuara comes. Tell girls to run to welcome him and guide him between the pits. A spy is watching. If Yuara walks on the pits he dies and our trap is revealed. *Por amor de Deus*, send girls quickly!"

Lourenço acted instantly. Seizing two young women, he propelled them doorward, talking swiftly the while. Yuara and his mate were already advancing innocently toward the few girls outside, none of whom had wit enough to warn him. But the two whom the Brazilian had grasped happened to be of quick intelligence, and now they darted out.

Before the visiting pair could reach the death-trap the girls were upon them, laughing as if delighted to see a man once more and deftly turning them aside to the point where two unobtrusive stubs marked the bridge of safety.

Vastly astonished by such effusive welcome from two girls whom they did not know, but by no means displeased thereby, the young warriors of the Suba clan were piloted to the door and inside. As they disappeared, the head of the spy also vanished.

"Woof!" muttered Knowlton, wiping sweat from his brow. "That was close! Here's hoping we have no more visitors."

Yuara and his companion meanwhile were being interrogated by both Lourenço and Monitaya, who in turn enlightened them as to the present state of affairs. At the promise of war the faces of the Suba men lighted up.

"Yuara comes only on a visit to learn news," Lourenço told the rest. "You remember that the day after our return a canoe was sent down-stream to a point where the wooden bars could be beaten and heard by Suba's men, and that a warning against the Red Bones and Schwandorf was given in that way. Yuara has become anxious to know more, so he is here."

"If he sticks around he'll learn a lot," predicted Tim.

With no waste of words or motion Yuara coolly attached himself and his fellow tribesman to McKay. Monitaya and his subchiefs were informed of the arrival and departure of the enemy scout. The word passed among the warriors, who, despite their innate equanimity, began to grit their pointed teeth and quiver like dogs held in

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leash. But another hour passed, and yet another; and still no word from the outposts arrived.

Suddenly a chorus of screams shrilled from the women outside. In a frenzy of fear they plunged through the doorways. Blending with their outcries, a hoarse yell of ferocity rose raucously from the direction of the creek. At once a louder ululation burst forth at the rear and sides of the clearing. Monitaya's outguards had failed, and the *malocas* were surrounded.

Loping from the bush fringing the stream came a score of yellow-faced, shirtless, barefooted brutes crisscrossed with cartridge-belts and gripping rifles. At their head loomed a burly black-whiskered creature with a revolver in each hand: the malignant Schwandorf himself.

Grinning like a pack of yellow-fanged wolves they doubled toward the low entrances, their guns spouting wantonly at the upper walls—a ragged volley meant to terrorize the defenceless women within, none of whom were to be killed until the handsomest had been cut out and set aside for slavery. Some of the heavy bullets bored through between logs and thudded wickedly into rafters and roof-poles within. But from the loopholes where the defending rifles lurked no shot cracked in reply.

The fiendish howling of the Red Bones, sweeping in from all sides to the butchery, swelled into a ferine screech that almost drowned the roar of the rifles. Into the view of the watchers at the loophole streamed hideous faces and naked brown bodies swerving inward from left and right to follow at the heels of the blackbeard and his gunmen. In a few seconds more the trotting line of Peruvians was backed and flanked by a horde of demons hungering for the taste of women and babes. On they came——

With the suddenness of a cataclysm the ground opened. Riflemen vanished in midstride. Savages screaming triumphant hate were gone in the flick of an eye. Others, instinctively digging their heels into the ground the instant those ahead of them disappeared, were hurled forward and down by the momentum of the following mass. Before the rush could be checked the trenches were packed with men struggling in frenzy to get out, wounding themselves and one another with the deadly points of their poisoned weapons.

Of the twenty gunmen only four remained. They were the four immediately behind Schwandorf. By blind chance the German had set foot on the narrow isthmus separating the twin trenches, saving himself and the henchmen at his heels from being engulfed. Now, as the Red Bones fought back from the trap yawning before them, he and the surviving Peruvians stood staring in momentary stupefaction at the welter of death on their flanks. The malevolent yells of the savages had been cut short by the catastrophe, and for the moment no sound was heard but the grunts and snarls of struggling men.

Then into the semi-silence burst a mighty voice: the battlefield voice of McKay.

"Now! Fire at will!"

THE walls spat flame and lead. A scythe of death swept above the ground where stood Schwandorf and his riflemen. The Peruvian half-breeds collapsed and lay still. But Schwandorf, shocked into activity by the impact of that first word, dodged death by an infinitesimal fraction of a second. Hurling himself backward, he struck the earth just as the bullets sped through the air over him. With a lightning rebound he was up while fresh cartridges were jumping into the rifle-barrels menacing him. Headlong he dived into the mass of Red Bones just behind. And the next bullets darting after him killed the savages, leaving him unharmed.

The command of McKay and the crack of the rifles sent the quivering Mayorunas into the fight. In a flash every masking tunnel-cover was thrown bodily into the air. Before the thunderstruck Red Bones had recovered from the shock of finding their gun-armed leaders annihilated and their mass being swept by swift-shooting rifles hidden in the walls, they beheld a horde of vindictive foes erupting from under those walls like warrior-ants rushing from subterranean galleries. A blood-chilling yell of concentrated fury smote their ears; a hastily loosed storm of war-arrows and short throwing-spears ripped into their flesh; a swift-running arc of light-skinned men swerved around them, shooting and stabbing as they went. They, who had so exultantly surrounded the homes of women and children, now were surrounded in turn.

From the doorway of Monitaya's *maloca* the two Brazilians and Jose now leaped forth

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and, firing as they ran, dashed to hold the entrance of the other big house. A few arrows whirred around them during their transit, but the shafts were shot hurriedly and missed.

Meanwhile the three bushmen were striking down enemies at every flash of their guns, firing with the swift surety of veterans of many a running fight. They reached their objective unwounded; and when they reached it a fringe of dead foes marked their passage along the face of the hostile array. Once within the door, they rapidly reloaded and sprayed lead along the trenches, which, though now nearly full, had become a dead-line past which no Red Bone sought to go.

Up on the earth embankments within the chief's house the four Americans fought steadily on: the soldiers shooting as coolly as if engaged merely in rapid-fire target practise, the silent Rand methodically driving arrows in swift succession from his own wall-slit. Arrows thudded thickly into the logs masking them. Bullets too slammed into their rampart—bullets from the heavy revolvers of Schwandorf, who, ever keeping himself protected by the bodies of his cannibal allies, shot with both hands as the chance came. And the German could shoot. With only the small gun-muzzles as targets, he planted bullets so close as to knock dirt more than once into the eyes of the riflemen and render them momentarily useless. After a time he got a bullet fair into a loophole.

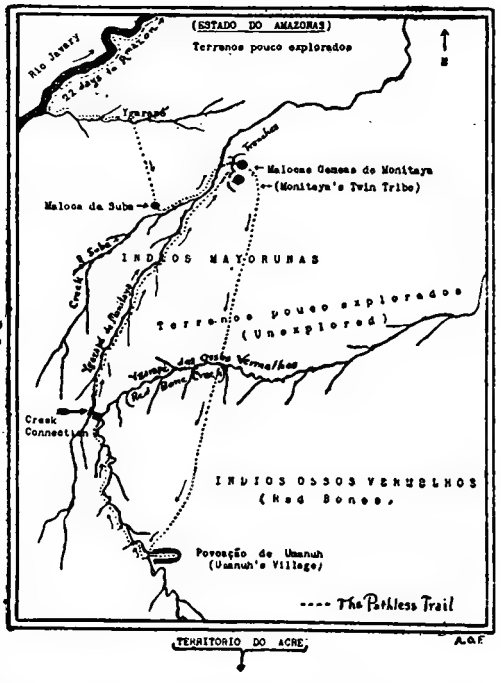
Knowlton grunted suddenly, swayed back, toppled, fell down the parapet. For a few seconds he lay still.

"Looey!" howled Tim. "How ye fixed? Hurt bad?"

The lieutenant heaved himself into a sitting position, stared around, clapped a hand to his right shoulder, looked at the red smear his palm brought away, reeled up and scrambled back to his rifle. Schwandorf's bullet had drilled clear through the shoulder, and in falling his head had struck one of the upright poles. Without a word he got his gun into action once more, shooting now from the left shoulder. Tim, with a tight grin of relief, devoted himself once more to trying to shoot down the dodging German.

The encircling Mayorunas, their first paroxysm of fury vented, now settled in cold hate to their work. On all sides their clubmen and spearmen were bludgeoning and stabbing at the close-packed Red Bones, leaping in, killing, springing back and onward with terrible efficiency. Beyond these a thin but deadly line of bowmen poured arrows in high-looping curves over the heads of the hand-to-hand combatants, the shafts whizzing far up, turning, and plunging down unerringly into the center of the enemy force. Each of those arrows could, and many did, end the lives of two or three adversaries by gouging their skins and letting the fearful *wourali* into their blood. The blow-gun men too were darting death into every opening, handling their clumsy weapons like feathers and constantly moving to spy out fresh targets.

But the men of Monitaya were by no means escaping unscathed. The Red Bones, assailed from every quarter and milling about in hopeless disorder, were fighting



now with desperate frenzy. Their own clubbers and stabbers were charging out and smashing skulls or piercing abdomens, their arrows rose in all directions at once, and some into whose veins the *wourali* had struck sprang in the last few moments of life on near-by foes and bit like mad dogs. With a leader and a chance to form into any sort of flying wedge they might have broken through with comparative ease and taken

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a far heavier toll. But they had no leader: for Umanuh, whose name meant "corpse," now was a corpse in truth, his merciless brain oozing from a skull shattered by a Mayoruna clubman; and Schwandorf was very busy looking out for Schwandorf. So it was every man for himself, with the devil rapidly taking not only the hindmost but the foremost as well.

Thicker and thicker fell the dead. The trenches now not only were filled to the level of the ground but piled with a windrow of bullet-torn bodies knocked down by the ever-spitting rifles. Jose, Pedro, and Lourenço abandoned all shelter and knelt in plain sight before the door which they had kept clear of all close attack.

Monitaya, until now a field general who strode up and down roaring commands and encouragement, suddenly cast away his regal rôle and, seizing an enormous club from one of his bodyguard, hurled himself on the nearest Red Bones—a raving, ravening demon of destructiveness whose glaring eyes smote terror into those fronting him and whose weapon swung like the club of Hercules. His bowmen and blow-gun men, at last out of missiles, came charging in with bare hands or weapons seized from fallen warriors. Maneuvering had ended. Henceforth the fight was a grappling *mêlée*.

Then the gun-fire dwindled and died. The rifle-cartridges were spent.

CHAPTER XXV

THE PASSING OF SCHWANDORF

THE three soldiers flung down their hot empty guns.

"Nothin' left but the gats and the steel," rumbled Tim. "Me, I'm goin' out and git some fresh air."

With which he drew pistol and machete, leaped down, and lunged through the door. McKay bounded at his heels

"Merry! Rand! Stay here!" he commanded. Then he was outside, his pistol roaring in unison with Tim's.

Knowlton and Rand looked at each other. The lieutenant fumbled his pistol from its holster, got it firmly in his left hand, slid down the embankment, and staggered out. Rand coolly walked over to Tim's discarded gun, picked it up, and followed.

Over at the other doorway the bushmen threw aside their useless guns and drew their machetes. Jose, grinning like a death's-head, whirled the bush-knife aloft and mockingly dared the Red Bones still fronting him to come and take it from him. Pedro and Lourenço indulged in no such bravado, but leaped like jaguars at their foes. Whereupon Jose, muttering a curse on them for getting the jump on him, dashed forward with furious abandon.

Their pistols emptied, the Americans also drew machetes—all except Rand, who had no weapon but the bulletless rifle—and waited. Few unwounded Red Bones now were left; but among those few Schwandorf still lived.

"Schwandorf!" bellowed McKay. "You yellow cur—you *schweinhund!* Come and fight!"

"Yeah!" taunted Tim. "The women and kids are inside. Come and git 'em!"

Schwandorf came. He came not because he wanted to, however, for his guns too were empty. He came because the Red Bones, sensing the challenge and loathing the blackbeard who had shielded himself so long among them, threw him out bodily. They had no time to stand and watch what might happen to him, but they took time to cast him out where he must stand on his own legs. Then, snarling, they resumed their now hopeless battle against their encompassing executioners.

For a moment the German stood glowering at McKay. Then, with a dramatic gesture, he threw aside his useless revolvers and advanced empty-handed.

"Man to man?" he growled.

"Man to man!" echoed McKay, passing his pistol to Tim and sheathing his machete. Fists clenched, he sprang forward.

Schwandorf halted. His hands remained empty—until the captain was within eight feet of him. Then he leaped back, his machete jumped into his fist, and its point stabbed for his antagonist's abdomen.

An instantaneous sidestep and twist of the body saved the captain from evisceration. The blade ripped through breeches and shirt and scraped the skin. As Schwandorf yanked it back for another thrust McKay struck it away with one hand and, without drawing his own steel, jumped again at his assailant. An instant later the two blackbeards were clinched in a death-grapple.

Schwandorf found his long knife useless

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and dropped it. He strove for a back-breaking hold, but found it blocked. McKay, though an indifferent swordsman, was a formidable wrestler and fist-fighter, and the German's advantage in weight was more than offset by the American's quickness and wiry strength. Science was thrown to the winds. A heaving, choking, wrenching man-fight it was, stumbling over bodies, each straining every muscle, trying every hold to twist and break the other and batter him down to death.

Smashing fist-blows brought blood dripping from their faces. Bone-wringing gripes forced gasps from their lungs and superhuman spasms of resistance from their outraged nerve-centers. They fell across a corpse, rolled on the ground, throttled, kicked, struck and tore. Finally, in a furious outburst of energy, the American fought his enemy down under him, clamped his body with iron knees, and crashed a terrific punch squarely between the German's glaring eyes. Schwandorf went limp.

At that instant a backward eddy of the battle surged over the pair. The maniacal Red Bones, fighting to the last bitter drop of doom, found two white men under their feet. Screeching, snarling, they fell on them like wild beasts, tearing with tooth and nail. Their arrows were gone, their darts exhausted, and no spearman was among them; they fought with nature's weapons, while above them one lone clubman struggled to swing down his lethal bludgeon without killing his fellows.

McKay, wrenching his machete loose and gripping it with both hands, got its point upward and jabbed blindly at the weight of flesh bearing him down. Faintly to his ears came yells of rage and the impact of blows—the battle-roars of Tim and Knowlton, who with their machetes were cleaving a way to their captain. But the beastly demons over him still crushed him down on Schwandorf, smothering him under the burden of bodies dead and alive. His stabs grew weak. Exhaustion and lack of air were killing him more surely than the savages.

Pedro, Lourenço, Jose and the inexplicable Rand came slashing and clubbing a path of their own to the beleaguered Scot—the Brazilians cutting straight ahead with deadly surety, the painted Peruvian chopping and thrusting with a fixed grin, Rand swinging the gun-butt down on head after head. From still another direction Yuara and his satellite came boring in with spears snatched from dead hands. The three rescue parties reached the squirming heap at almost the same moment. But Yuara was the one whose arrival counted most.

In one last convulsive struggle McKay heaved himself up until he was once more on his knees. His head came out of the welter, his mouth wide and gulping for breath. The lone clubman grunted, swung his weapon high, and with all the power of his muscular body drove it down at that upturned, unprotected face.

With a mighty plunge Yuara threw himself over the captain. His spear sank into the stomach of the clubman. But the heavy wooden war-hammer fell with crushing force. As the Red Bone collapsed with the spear-head buried in his middle, his slayer also dropped under that terrible stroke with head mangled beyond recognition.

Yuara, son of Rana, warrior of Suba, who owed his life to McKay's rough surgery, had paid his debt.

Under the impact of his body McKay also slumped forward, senseless.

OVER them now burst the bloodiest berserk battle of that bloody day. The soldiers, the bushmen, and the reclaimed Raposa, already smeared from head to foot with red stains from their own veins and those of foemen, went stark mad. Before their united ferocity the men of Umanuh dropped as if rolled under by an inexorable machine of war. Backward they reeled, striving now to escape the red wall of cold steel surging at them—only to fall under a fresh attack of ravening Mayorunas who came pouring in upon them from the sides. The last of the group lurched headless to the ground under a decapitating side-swing from the awful club of Monitaya himself.

Then Knowlton, his life-blood still draining slowly but surely away through his wounded shoulder, pitched on his face and was still.

"Back!" gasped Tim. "Git looey and cap out o' this! Here, you Raposy! Lend a hand!"

The Raposa, his green eyes ablaze and his obdurate calmness totally gone, glared around as if seeking one more Red Bone to kill. Then, as Tim heaved the lieutenant across his shoulders and went lunging

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across contorted bodies toward the *malocas*, he ran back to the heap where McKay lay and dug him clear. Lourenço aided him in lifting the captain, and they bore him off after Knowlton.

Pedro and Jose shoved the other bodies aside until they uncovered the prone figure of Schwandorf—a ghastly form dyed from hair to heels with the blood of the cannibals whom he had led there. To all appearances he was dead. Yet the Brazilian and the Peruvian looked keenly at him, then at each other.

"There is a saying, is there not, that the devil takes care of his own?" grinned Jose. "It would be sad if this man should yet live and escape. See! What is that tall Red Bone doing over yonder?"

Pedro followed his pointing finger. He saw no such Red Bone as Jose had mentioned. But when he looked back at Schwandorf he noticed something that made him glance quickly at Jose once more.

"Ah yes, Señor Schwandorf is truly dead," the Peruvian added, wiping his machete carelessly on one bare leg. "Whether or not the devil takes care of his own, as I was saying, there is no doubt that *el Aleman* now is with the devil. So, since we can do nothing for him, let us look after the two North American *señores*."

Pedro, with a grim smile, turned with him toward the tribal houses. There was nothing else for them to do, for the Mayorunas now were dispatching the last survivors of the attacking force. Before the pair entered the low doorway a long, triumphant yell burst from the hoarse throats of the men of Monitaya. Of all the Red Bones who had swept in such ghoulish glee into that clearing not one now remained alive.

At that shout of victory and the entrance of the men to whose precautions and prowess they owed so much, the women flocked again into the center of the *maloca* and the children dived out through the tunnels to behold the battlefield.

Though bullets and arrows had come through the doorway, those inside had escaped all injury by hugging the protective earth embankment or taking refuge in the vacant shafts under the walls. Now the older women, experienced in treatment of wounds, busied themselves with the white warriors while the younger ones fetched water and pieces of *isca*—a natural styptic made by ants—or made up pads and poultices of healing herbs.

Tim, who had expected to play surgeon with his crude knowledge of first aid, found himself not only relieved of his job but being bathed and plastered with the others. He, Jose, Pedro, Lourenço, and even Rand were gashed by thrusts from broken spear-shafts, bleeding from open bites, ripped by glancing sweeps of tooth-set clubs, bruised by fierce blows—minor injuries all, but such as might easily have resulted in blood-poisoning unless given prompt attention. Later on they were to be thankful for these ministrations, but now they tolerated them only because they could do nothing for the captain and the lieutenant.

McKay and Knowlton were under the direct and capable treatment of the wives of the great chief. Of the two, McKay looked by far the worse but actually was in much better condition. From the waist up he was clawed, bitten and bruised so badly that he was a fearsome spectacle; his left arm was dislocated, three fingers of his right hand were broken, and his muscles were so wrenched that for a week afterward he moved like a cripple; but his present unconsciousness was largely due to exhaustion and partial asphyxiation.

Knowlton, whose skin was comparatively unmarked but whose veins had continued to pour vital fluid from his gaping bullet-wound during his stubborn fight, now was badly weakened. But whatever could be done for him was being done, and the others could only stand by.

The women not engaged in caring for the fighting visitors soon found themselves busy with their own male relatives, who came stumbling in by themselves or were carried by others. The Red Bones, though finally annihilated, had made their mark in the Mayoruna tribe. At that moment twenty-six of Monitaya's warriors lay dead among the bodies of their enemies, and before the next sunrise several more passed on to join the spirits of their comrades in arms.

Yet all who survived, though some were crippled for life, thought only of the victory and gloated on their scars of combat. As for those who had fallen—they were dead, had died as Mayorunas should, and so needed no sympathy or regret. Even now their bodies were being collected for immediate transportation into the forest, where,

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in accordance with the tribal custom, they would be burned.

SOME of the men who brought in the wounded men continued on to the bushmen and, in significant sign-manual, requested a loan of their machetes. Having received them, they hastened out to join those who, equipped with hardwood knives, were gathering the sinister trophies of triumph before heaving the dead Red Bones out to the waiting vultures.

"Urrrgh!" growled Tim. "'Twas a lovely scrap, but I wisht I was somewheres else now it's over. While ye was away they brought in the fists and feet o' some guy they caught in a trap——"

"We know," nodded Pedro.

"Yeah. Wal, I s'pose we got to look pleasant. Dog eat dog, as the feller says. Long as somebody has to git et, I'm glad it ain't us." Wherewith he turned to the Raposa and changed the subject. "Raposy, old sport, ye sure done some good work for a crazy guy. I'll tell the world ye cracked heads like a Bowery cop full o' bootleg booze."

The Raposa's green eyes glimmered. In fact, they almost twinkled. And for the second time the wild man spoke.

"I am not crazy."

"Huh? My gosh, ye spoke four whole words! That makes six in a week. Be careful, feller, or ye'll strain yerself. And as far's bein' crazy's concerned, don't let it worry ye none. We're all crazy too, or we wouldn't be here."

Under cover of his banter the veteran eyed the other sharply. As he turned his gaze aside to the moving figures about him he thought:

"Begorry, he don't look like a nut, at that. Mebbe somethin's unscrambled his brains again. Here's hopin', anyways."

The big tribe-house now was full of life. Small groups of warriors, their hurts dressed with primitive poultices, gathered around the hammocks of those more seriously injured and discussed the battle. Others came in bearing armfuls of severed Red Bone hands and feet, which were distributed among the family triangles.

The women, their remedial work done, now turned to the clay cooking-vessels, freshened the fires, stripped the flesh of their enemies from the bones, and set it to boil. Among the hammocks moved the sub-chiefs, their eyes still shining with the light of battle, examining the wounded men and glancing at the preparations for the dire feast to come.

Over all drifted a steadily thickening smoke which rolled up and out through the vent in the peak of the roof, where the setting sun smote it with rays of gleaming red. Around the *maloca* gleamed the red light of the cooking-fires among whose burning fagots bubbled the red pots and pans. Red men and women passing about in a crimson setting—the scene formed a fitting end to the reddest day in the unwritten records of the tribe who since noon had proved themselves worthy champions of the ancient god whose name they never had heard but who nevertheless ruled their lives—the red god Mars.

Monitaya himself, head high and chest swelling with pride, now came striding lithely in, followed by a young warrior carrying something. He stopped between the hammocks of McKay and Knowlton, studied their faces gravely, listened as his wives told of what had been done. At almost the same moment the eyes of the pair slowly opened and stared up at him.

The face of the great chief melted in one of his transforming smiles. The captain and the lieutenant grinned pluckily back. With a nod of silent comradeship the big savage turned to his own hammock and sat down. Two of his women built up the royal fire and fell to work on the things handed over by the young warrior. Tim and his mates took one squint at what they were doing. Then they moved between the fire and the two officers, blocking the view.

"'Bout time ye woke up and listened to the birdies," Tim chaffed. "Fight's over and we been hangin' round waitin' for ye to quit snorin', so's we could hear ourselves think. Lay still, now! Ye're all plastered up nice and comfy—and don't preach to me no more about the girls. Ye had every dang one o' the big chief's wives hangin' over ye and kissin' ye so hard it sounded like a machine-gun. Ain't that right, fellers? Me, I'm so jealous I could bite the both of ye."

"Schwandorf dead?" hoarsely queried McKay.

"Huh? Oh, him? Sure. Ye fixed him right, cap. The pretty li'l blackbirds has flew away with him by now. Say, ye mind

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that feller Yuarry? Know what he done? Wal——"

And while he talked, behind his back the wives of Monitaya completed their task and dropped into the great chief's stew-pot the flesh of the black-bearded slaver and slayer who would menace them no more.

CHAPTER XXVI

PARTNERS

SEVEN men squatted around a camp-fire on the river-bank. Beyond them, half revealed by the flickering light of the flames, rose the poles of a *tambo* wherein empty hammocks hung waiting. At the edge of the water lay two canoes.

Five of the men wore the habiliments of civilized beings—though their shirts and breeches were so tattered and stained that a civilized community would have looked askance at them. The other two were nude as savages; but their beards and tanned skins were those of white men.

Beards of varying length seemed, in fact, to be the fashion; for every one present wore one, and all but two were very dark. Of the odd pair, one's thin face was partly covered by stubby blond hair, while the other's broad jaw was masked by a growth of unmistakable red.

Lifting their cigarets, the blond man and a tall eagle-faced comrade moved their arms stiffly as if still hampered by injuries. Newly healed scars showed on the skins of the rest.

"Injuns are a funny lot," declared the red-haired one. "There's Monitaya, now. Keeps us a couple weeks, doctors us half to death, feeds us till we gag, gives us new canoes, sends a platoon o' hard guys with us to see that we git to the river safe—and don't even say good-by. No handshake, no 'Good-luck, fellers'—jest a grin like we was goin' to walk round the house and come right back. And the lads that come out with us done the same: turned round and quit us without a word. I bet if we lived amongst 'em long we'd git to be dummies too."

For a moment there was silence. For no apparent reason all glanced at one of the naked men, on whose skin faintly showed reddish streaks.

"You would," he said.

"Huh! Gee, Rand's talkin' again! First time since we licked them Red Boneheads. Two whole words. Easy, feller, easy!"

"I will be easy. But it's time I talked. I am not dumb. I am not crazy."

The green-eyed man spoke slowly, as if forming each word in his mind before pronouncing it. The rest squatted with eyes riveted on his face.

"I have not talked before because I had to find myself. I had to hear English spoken and become used to it. I had to put things together in my mind. Even now some things are not clear. But I can talk and make sense of my talk. I will tell what I can remember. First tell me one thing. McKay, am I a murderer?"

"A murderer? You? If you are we never heard of it."

"A man named Schmidt. Gustav Schmidt. German merchant at Manaos."

"Gustav Schmidt? Piggy little runt, bald and fat, with a scar across his chin?"

"Yes."

"He's dead, but you didn't kill him. He was shot a little while ago by a young Brazilian for getting too intimate with the young fellow's wife. We heard about it while we were in Manaos, and saw his picture. What about him?"

"I thought I killed him. I struck him with a bottle. I was told he was dead. How long have I been here?"

"You left the States in 1915. It is now 1920."

"Five years? My God! What has happened in that time? Is my mother well?"

The others looked pityingly at him. Slowly Knowlton spoke.

"Your mother died two years ago from heart trouble. Your uncle, Philip Dawson, also is dead."

Rand's jaw set. The others shifted their gaze and busied themselves with making new cigarets, spending much time over the simple task.

"Poor mother!" Rand said huskily. "Uncle Phil—he was a good old scout. And I was here—buried alive—only half alive! My head— Tell me, what happened on the night before you dressed my lame foot? I remember clearly everything from the time I awoke in the canoe before daylight that morning. Before that there is a blur."

Knowlton sketched the events of that night, and told also of the glimpse which he and Pedro had caught of the "wild man" while waiting outside the house of the

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Red Bone chief. A flash lighted up Rand's face.

"So that is how I got my sore head. You struck me with your rifle-butt. That explains much. Before I became a wild beast I was shot in the head. The bullet did not go through the skull. It struck me a terrible blow on the crown. When I recovered consciousness I was not myself. I have never been the same until——"

"Gee cripes!" exploded Tim. "That's it! I seen that same thing up home. Bug Sullivan, it was. When he was a li'l feller he tumbled downstairs and hit his head, and for most ten years he was foolish. Then a brick fell off a buildin' and landed on his bean. It knocked him for a gool, but when he come out of it he was bright as a new dime. Looey, when ye busted Rand with yer gun ye jarred somethin' loose inside, and now he's good as any of us."

"By George, you're right!" cried the lieutenant. "Things like that do happen. I've heard of them. Haven't you, Rod?"

McKay nodded.

"That is it," affirmed the Raposa. "I have not been insane. But much was gone from me. My mind was a house full of closed doors which I could not open. I knew who I was and why I was here, but I knew also that something had happened to my brain; knew I was defective; believed I was wanted for murder. So I could not go out. I could only stay here, prowl the jungle, live the jungle life.

"Now that the closed doors have opened again, others have swung shut. I cannot remember much of my wild-beast life here. Some things are clear. Too clear. Torturings and horrible feasts. Perhaps I should be grateful that some things are forgotten.

"BUT now my life up to the time I was shot is plain again. I talked with a man who had traveled the Amazon and the Andes. I never had seen either, and I was ripe for something new. A steamer was just sailing south, and I got aboard in a hurry. No baggage but a suitcase and five thousand dollars. I had traveled a good deal—Europe, Canada, Japan—and always found that plenty of money was all a man needed. Thought it was the same way here. I've learned better.

"I visited Rio—a few hours—and then came up along the coast and inland. At Manaos I got into trouble. Went ashore and got to drinking with two Germans. One of them—Schmidt—grew ugly and said a lot of rotten things about the States. Tell me something, men—is the war over, and did our country get into it?"

"It is, and it did." And Knowlton outlined the epochal occurrences of the world conflict.

"And I missed that too!" mourned Rand. "But I started a war of my own down here, anyway. When I quit seeing red I had a bottleneck in my hand and both the Germans were down. Somebody said Schmidt was dead. A couple of men tried to grab me. I fought my way clear, hid awhile, got back on the boat without being noticed, and paid one of the crew well to hide me in the hold and feed me.

"Nearly died from heat and suffocation down there, but lived to reach Iquitos, where my man smuggled me ashore. I thought I was safe there. But before I could make a move to travel on I fell into the hands of that cursed Schwandorf."

"Schwandorf!"

"Schwandorf. He was in Iquitos. The sailor who hid me must have sold me out to him. Schwandorf told me he was a police officer in Brazilian employ. Said he would take me back to stand trial for murdering Schmidt. The dirty blackmailer took all my money to keep his mouth shut and take me to a 'safe place.' The safe place was up this river. I came up here with him in a canoe paddled by some tough Peruvians. Then he began trying to bully me into doing dirty work for him—running women into Peru. I saw red again and jumped for him. He gave me that bullet on the head.

"After that things are badly blurred. I found myself among savages. How I got there, why I wasn't killed, I don't know. Schwandorf was there awhile. Then he went away with his gang, leaving me very sure of only one thing—I was a murderer and would be executed if caught. And—well, that's about all, except that the savages seemed rather afraid of me and didn't want me around."

There was another silence. Then Lourenço remarked:

"Between Schmidt and Schwandorf you have suffered much. It is possible that there was a connection of some sort between them. But neither can ever trouble you again. I do not see why Schwandorf took the trouble even to put you among the Red

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Bones. One more bullet would have ended you."

"Any ideas on that subject, Jose?" asked McKay.

"Only a guess, *capitan*. I was not here five years ago, and I knew nothing of Schwandorf then. But I know he always schemed for his own good and overlooked no chances. So perhaps, finding this man not dead but darkened in mind by his bullet, he thought he might be able to use him in some way at some future time. A dead man is not useful to any one. If this man should never become valuable he could live and die forgotten among the savages, where he could do Schwandorf no harm. If worth something he could be found again."

"Cold-blooded Prussian efficiency," nodded McKay. Then he spoke directly to Rand.

"Since you're mentally sound," he went on, "we may as well tell you how you happen to be among us. We three—Merry, Tim, and I—came here to find you. The settlement of the Dawson estate hinges on you."

"On me? How? I've no claim to it. Paul Dawson, Uncle Phil's son——"

"Is dead too. Killed in action in the Argonne. You're next in line."

McKay watched him keenly. So did Knowlton. The half expected jubilance did not come.

"So Paul's gone," was Rand's reply. "Hard luck. Suppose I hadn't been found —then what?"

"In due time the money would go to a school. Boys' school."

"Orphans? Blind? Cripples?"

"Hardly." McKay's mouth curved sardonically. He named a preparatory school of the "exclusive" type. Rand's mouth also twisted.

"That hotbed of snobbery? That twin sister to a society girls' finishing school? Might have known it, though. Uncle Phil was fond of the sort of education that doesn't educate. I'm glad you fellows found me. I'll go home and collect every red cent, just to keep it out of the hands of the supercilious bunch of bishops that run that sissy-spawner."

KNOWLTON chuckled appreciatively.

"It's not the sort of school that breeds he men, for a fact," he agreed. "But you don't seem much enthused over having a couple of millions dropped into your lap."

Rand sat still. His face remained cheerless, impassive.

"What is money?" he said presently. "I've always had plenty of it. What's it done for me? When you have it you can't tell whether people are friends to you or only friends to your money. It makes you cynical, suspicious. What's worse, you depend too much on it. You think it will do everything. Then if you land in a place where it's no good and you haven't got it anyway, you're up against it a good deal harder than the fellow who never had it but knows how to handle himself without it."

"True for ye," Tim concurred heartily. "All the same, I bet ye'll change yer tune after ye git home."

"Will I?" The green eyes impaled him. "Maybe. But I don't think so. I've had my run at blowing in money on myself alone. Now I'm going to blow some on other folks. I missed out on the war, but—There must be quite a few of our fellows lamed and crippled by that war. And I'll gamble that the Government isn't treating them all like princes. I know something about governments."

"Princes? Say, feller, there's many a dog that's took better care of than some of our boys back home!"

"So I thought. The income from a couple of millions, along with some of the principal, will do a lot of good if used right. And—" His eyes turned to the three bushmen.

"Do not look at us in that way," said Lourenço, reading his thought. "We can make all the money we need, and we came with the *capitao* and his comrades only because we wanted excitement. Use your money for the crippled men who need it."

"And Jose Martinez also is well able to provide for his wants," coolly added the other naked man. "I am here only to settle old scores, and now they are settled. Each man is goaded by his own spur—money, wine, women, excitement, revenge. Money is not mine."

He yawned, arose, stretched like a cat, and stepped toward his hammock. The two Brazilians also moved toward the *tambo*. The others stood a moment longer beside the fire.

"Well, since we three didn't come here

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because of wine, women, or revenge," Knowlton said whimsically, "it must have been for money and excitement. Don't know which was the stronger lure, but if we could have only one of the two I think we'd let the money slide. How about it, Rod?"

"Right! And, Rand, let me say this: Before we knew you we had an impression that you were more or less of a worthless pup. We've changed our ideas. If you ever go broke and want to hit a trail into some new place to make a strike of your own, and you need partners, let us know."

And he held out his hand.

The naked millionaire took it.—For the first time a faint smile lightened his face.

"I'll do that—partners!" he promised.

"Yeah! That's the word. Pardners! Only li'l Timmy Ryan bucks at ever travelin' back into this here, now, Ja-va-ree jungle. I got enough of it. Right now I'm homesick."

"So say we all," affirmed Knowlton. "Now let's turn in."

But Tim stood a little longer looking out at the moonlit river and the two waiting canoes. His gaze roved along the stream, northward. He lifted his head, opened his mouth, expanded his lungs. And then the astounded denizens of forest and stream cut short their discordant concert to listen to something they never had heard before and never would hear again: a great voice thundering a censored version of a North American Army song.

"Home, boys, home! Home we want to be!
Home, boys, home, in God's countree!
We'll raise Ol' Glory to the top o' the pole
And we'll all come back—not a dog-gone soul!"

THE END

The Black Malemiut

by Stanton C. Lapham

Author of "Gold Is Where You Find It"

EXCEPT for the white splotch on his breast and the silver-gray of his wolf tail, he was black—black as the dread scourges of the Siberian forests, whose Nubian shadows strike terror to the traveler, and whose hell's chorus vibrates fear across the vast spaces of the North.

Dimly in the back of his knowingness pictures of his earliest life persisted. The picture recollections were separated from the present by a berg-infested sea journey from the Siberian coast to the Alaskan shore. There still remained a memory of nomadic wanderings; of skin tents and boats; of his first kill and the taste of hot blood; of the glory of the first white world and the tug of a flying toboggan; of hunts and fights and freedom. Now the Black Malemiut was surrounded by a motley crew of trace-dogs, waiting for the Aurora-flared nights, and the congealing of the land to a glittering highway.

At twelve months the malemiut was double the size of his breed at his age. With a hundred other sled-dogs he lifted his black muzzle in the eery wolf-chant, and howled out the mysterious yearning of the wild.

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Of the dim shapes peering out of the past, there was one his comprehension retained clearly. He dreamed of a slant-eyed, round-faced boy, in caribou parka and seal-skin water-boots. Well he knew the meaning of the whizz of the boy's arrows, and the lightning cast of his ivory-tipped spear. In his dreams he whimpered for the raven-haired boy. He nosed eagerly on the scent of wounded geese; dug frantically into muskrat houses, or retrieved some hidden object.

Dreaming, again he gathered sticks and small trees for the fire, dragging them to the skin tent; or watched for hours, almost submerged in the water, fishing for salmon beside some narrow channel. The delight of all sports was the sudden plunge beneath the surface after the flitting shadows, the swift strike at the darting fish, and then the mad ecstasy of the struggling, flapping salmon as he proudly lugged it ashore to his little bronze-faced master.

As the light of the Summer days at St. Michael diminished, more numerous were the prospective purchasers who visited the dog kennels.

The tundra stiffened under foot in the crisp October nights, and to the north, dissolving clouds of silvered light presaged the down-coming Winter. The wolf-chant of the trace-dogs in the kennels grew more eager and oft repeated.

The Black Malemiut wakened from his dreams one day, to the tug of his chain in the hands of a new master. With four other sled-dogs he followed at the heels of a heavy squat man to a camp on the beach. He did not know that the man whose scent came to him unpleasantly, causing the hair on his neck to rise and ripple, had grudgingly paid the top price for him, the pick of the pack.

The malemiut read man-creatures by his nose as he did the scent of animals on the wind, or clinging in their footprints. Something indefinably repulsive in the man's odor impinged him with resentment.

For a month the malemiut had been the property of Jack Matson. Ice formed over all the shore waters. Overhead, the arctic lights flared, and the hills of the coast country grew white.

Harnessed to a wooden-shoed Eleut sled, the five dogs raced with it light, and their long-pent energies found satisfaction in hauling driftwood to the camp. The malemiut did not resent the whip in Matson's hand, and his offensive odor became merely the man; as the carrion scent of a wolverene indicated that thieving glutton.

A new set of voice expressions were added to the malemiut's knowledge. He came to understand the "Mush-on," and the explosive "Hi-ee, Hi-ee," of the Fort Yukon half-breed, who often drove the team. It was from Matson that the malemiut first heard the word that was to designate him from all other creatures; the name that should thrill him with all the devotion of "Man's first friend," for a man.

"Gee, Thor! Gee, you black dog. Mush, Thor!"

He was truly a Thor; a North-god of a dog in every shining line, from the tip of his black head to the end of his silver-gray tail. In the breadth of his chest, his muscle-erect neck and powerful legs strength shone from him.

The might of the malemiut and his superiority in strength and form had gained for him the name of the Scandinavian god of mythology. But that Matson, in giving the name Thor, had in mind the traditions of the eldest son of Odin, is improbable. That the beautiful malemiut should one day vindicate his name, "Thor, the deliverer of mortals in distress," was never remotely in the imagination of a man like Matson.

AS THE delightful cold increased with shortening days, Thor observed the preparation making for the twelve hundred mile trip up the Yukon. Pointer, a short-haired female husky, led the team. Thor's barrel-like body and broad shoulders, rising a span above the big wheel-dog, came next to the wiry high-strung leader.

While returning to camp with a half packed sled load of supplies; rounding a sharp turn in the trail; the sled slewed heavily down-hill, and in an instant, dogs and load were a tangle at the bottom of a ten-foot bank. Running behind, Matson had made no effort to check their speed at the turn, and was too far away to assist the straining dogs in their effort to hold the sled away from the bank. With harness fouled beneath the overturned load, Thor saw Matson descending on the confused team in uncontrolled rage. His angry shouts and curses, hurled at the unoffend-

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ing dogs were inexplicable. Thor understood the meaning of the lash. If Matson had applied the whip to force the team up an impossible grade, or had flayed them to keep order, he would have comprehended.

The rule of the whip was a just law. Pointer was whimpering and crying like a hurt child, before the lash burned her. The team was in a struggling uproar, as Matson sated his fury, lashing and clubbing them with his dog-whip.

Thor felt but numbly the clubbed whip descending upon his head and shoulders, but every stroke was a stinging outrage, a cowardly unfairness that he instinctively associated with the repellent odor of his first white master. As the scorching lash burned welts into his team-mates, Thor's lips twitched and writhed back from his long white fangs. He did not comprehend. He did not attempt to fight back. Only the crying Pointer, her delicate nose dripping blood, and the bruised whimpering team caused an inexpressible aching, aching within. The man-scent of Matson carried to his nostrils a more definable repugnance than ever.

The first days on the cut across to the Yukon from St. Michael were uneventful. With a light snow and opalescent days succeeded by glorious early arctic nights, the team swung out on the frost-etched ice of the Great River.

The urge of the pack sang in Thor's body. Forgetful of trace and breast-pad, he was following the footsteps of dark-coated ancestors; migrating up and up plated streams from coast to mountains. More distant grew Thor's memory of races and hunts with his slant-eyed little master, beyond the wide water. His dreams of packing sticks and salmon fishing were exchanged for the exultant reality of travel and the excitement of the racing team.

For Takuthe-George, the half-breed, Thor evinced neither like nor dislike. His demand of the sled-dogs, tugging the load over ice-jams and dragging it up steep banks was severe. The lash swung often, and always the nerve-strung Pointer yelped at the crack of the whip. The half-breed was stoical; the team must pull the load, that was all. They understood, but the unjustifiable rage of Matson in a hard situation was demoralizing.

Below Nulato, in a sharp bend of the Yukon, the inshore set of the swift current had kept the river open. Anchor-ice and floes had backed up the surface water, and the open spaces between the edge-turned jams were covered with treacherous ice.

Seeking a safe way over the piled high jams in mid-stream, George left the team with Matson. Impatient at the delay, he began working the team along the edges of the new formed ice. It was almost impossible to keep the team off the safe ridges. Instinctively they sensed danger. Their knowingness warned them of the black whirling suction beneath.

Again and again Matson flung the quaking lead-dog away from the ridges; her acute instinct forcing her into his clubbed whip and vicious kicks. Forced to violate instinct more compelling than reason, Pointer clawed and dragged her body along the thin ice, whining and crying.

From one solid crest to another they made their way across the thin places between. Surmounting a barrier of upturned flows they could reach safe going beyond a wide space of new ice. They must risk the treacherous crossing or return.

At the sound of the rumbling, churning current beneath, every hair on Thor's back stood on end. Fearless, he voiced a heavy-throated protest. Eyeing the strong ice toward shore, the dogs sensed what was expected.

Whimpering, with belly dragging, Pointer clawed out a few feet. Thor, erect and silent, followed, the team straightened toward shore. With curses and the bite of the lash, Matson drove them forward. Slipping, clawing, their feet sprawling, the team headed inshore.

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Standing on the solid jam, Matson yelled, "Mush, Mush-on," throwing chunks of ice at the striving dogs. A hundred feet out, Pointer began leaping in short jumps against the breast-pad, as if danger were in close pursuit. The more solid ice was but a few yards away. Pointer and Thor made for it in swift leaps, dragging the team with them. They had all but gained safe going, when the back end of the long sled disappeared. They felt the ice tilting beneath their feet, and with yelps clawed desperately.

THE two lead dogs were inshore from the break. Their sharp claws furrowing the ice, they hauled the following dogs to safety. Then with a jerk that threw the lead dogs off their feet the front end of the sled sank, leaving the wheel dogs swimming and clawing at the edge of the break. A few feet more of ice gave way under their feet. For a moment the strain of the leaders saved the team. The undertow caught the sled more and more as it settled, and the dogs on the ice were drawn backward inch by inch toward the black swirl of water. Thor's powerful legs worked like pistons. Pointer, her body hugging the ice, held on, gashing the ice with her claws. The suction of the current drew them back until Pointer and Thor alone remained on the ice.

Raving and yelling at the dogs, the cursing Matson watched the desperate struggle.

Then Thor's swift-clawing feet found leverage against a ridge of ice. His massive body straightened. Unyielding he lay into the breast-pad, the helpless dogs and current-gripped sled swinging by his traces. Like a heavy pendulum, dogs and sled were swept from side to side by the clutching water. Swaying to the weight, Thor slowly inclined forward until his broad breast lay close to the ice.

Suddenly there echoed from up-stream the "Hi-ee, hi-ee, ho," of the half-breed. He had seen their fight with the engulfing water and at full speed came running to their assistance. With solid footing, George helped the team to safety.

After a pause of two days to dry the outfit, with all the pride of trace and trail, the team was again on the run up the ice-paved Yukon.

To Thor's knowldege of Matson had come another lesson; the subtle fear to obey him. In a close place the whole team began balking at Matson's authority, and in return he vented his malevolence on the dogs at the slightest provocation. With every clubbing administered to the team Thor's antipathy for the man increased.

Once when Matson had beaten the wheel-dog into insensibility, a frenzy of rage overwhelmed Thor. It was his first outbreak against the rightful rule of a man—a domination that had been as acceptable and natural as the instinct to swim and hunt.

In a moment, without warning his huge pliant body shot up in a lightning spring at Matson. In mid-air the harness deflected the lunge. Thor's head flashed sidewise, his glittering teeth clipped together, grazing the man's throat. Astounded, Matson sprang back, realizing the horrible proximity of the dog's saber fangs. With uplifted club, Matson hesitated, deterred by what he saw in the blaze of the dog's eyes. Before he could aim a blow, Thor rushed the full length of the traces straight at him, his jaws closed on the club, wrenching it from Matson's hand.

Erect, lion-like, his defiant eyes intent on the man, he snarled a savage protest at Matson's brutality. He discerned the craven. Cowardice came thick to him in the man's obnoxious odor. He writhed in the harness, whirling and snapping at the traces withholding him from the object of his righteous rage.

Matson's demoralizing influence told on the team. The snap and vim of the dogs dwindled daily.

Spirit broken and stale, more than worn by the nine hundred miles of travel, the outfit pulled into camp below the Yukon Flats. From river level to camping place was a sharp rise. It would require the united strength of the team to negotiate the bank.

Matson hammered the dogs until every semblance of team-work was gone. Nerves jumping, pulling erratically, the grade was impossible. Terrified and bewildered, Pointer refused to move. The lash cutting them, Thor and his mates struggled frantically, dug their feet into the snow, and lay low. Their efforts were unsuccessful, and they stood panting.

Enraged, Matson grabbed a birch club and charged the team. Fear paralyzed, Pointer became the object of his attack.

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Cursing and shouting, he clubbed the beautiful husky until she blindly staggered to her feet, dodging from side to side. Her tawny head matted with blood, the heavy club descended on her repeatedly. She fell and remained down. The snow was spattered with crimson. Pointer lay quietly where she had fallen.

Thor saw. His team-mates saw. They sensed the unseen thing that had come to the leader, lying there silent, unmoving in the whiteness that almost covered her. The great black dog sat erect on his haunches, pointing his nose to the sky he sounded the long weird malemiut death-song.

Matson saw Thor's black mane bristling in recurrent waves, every articulation of his body quivering. Anticipating the mad fury that had once before possessed the dog, he fled.

WHEN George descended to the team Thor had twisted out of the harness. He stood nosing the limp body of Pointer, as if seeking the mystery of the appalling thing that had come close to them. He sensed the fatal danger at the hands of Matson, but he did not understand it more than he did the amazing stillness of the beautiful Pointer, or the yearning melancholy he had wailed up to the arctic sky in the wild dirge of his kind.

Like a shadow, now appearing in the open, and then his glossy black bulk blending with the low-hanging spruces, Thor kept at a distance from the camp in the morning. A score of times he saw Matson aiming a gun at him. He knew the meaning of a gun, and felt the menace bearing upon himself. A strange reluctance to kill the dog eased Matson's finger on the trigger a dozen times that forenoon. The righteous arbiter of life and death decided between the man coward and the brave dog, and Thor lived. The team pulled out, leaving the dog behind.

Whining softly for his mates, darting up the trail to within sight of the plodding team, then as swiftly returning to nose the body of the unmoving Pointer; that day opened for Thor a new chapter of experiences. For hours he lay watching the enormously quiet form that was Pointer. She was there, and yet in some undefinable way he knew that she had gone. He whined to awaken her, pounced playfully upon the white powdery mounds of snow with his big paws, wagged his silver-gray tail, nosed the pretty body, then suddenly stilled with unfathomable, brooding mystery, he sounded the death-note again through the vast silence.

Toward evening of the second day he caught a snow-shoe rabbit. The next morning, he again inspected Pointer, who still refused to be wakened, then the great black form moved swiftly on the trail up the Yukon.

Scent guided, Thor threaded the criss-cross, overlapping tracks of men and dogs to the cabin occupied by Matson, at Fort Yukon. He touched noses with his team-mates in the night and was gone. By the same certain nose faculty he knew where George, the half-breed, lived. Though he did not see them, a week later he was aware of Matson's departure for Circle City.

No longer a trace-dog, the lure of the hunt was strong upon Thor. Within five miles of the town he pulled down a caribou, breaking its neck in one hurtling leap. For weeks he guarded the kill and feasted on it.

Always, with his nose up the wind, he caught and smelled out new man odors. The half-breed's scent was there, but it did not attract. He followed teams going and coming; the pride and call of the trail tolling him far.

Once, when the blaze of the aurora had turned midnight into silvered whiteness, feeling up the wind he encountered a man scent that stirred him agreeably. He nosed the odor to a cabin near the Porcupine. Again and again he returned to the locality. He often trailed behind the man the short distance between the Porcupine and Fort Yukon. The prints of his immense pads were constantly fresh near the cabin.

Jim Bailey caught glimpses of a gloriously coated black wolf shadowing him, and thought it strange that a lone wolf should range near the setttlement, early in the season. For hours at night Thor observed the light shining from Bailey's window. He often watched the streamer of smoke rising from the cabin in the morning, until the pleasant man-scent drifted to him when Bailey appeared.

Thor came to know the man intimately by sight and hearing, but most of all the smell that revealed the quality of the man. The love and adoration of a man grew and warmed in his blood. He was

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filled with a vibrant longing to toil for the man he had found, to follow at his heels, to hunt with him, to obey him. Often at night he stood guard before Bailey's door; sensing the life sounds and smells coming in from the dark shadowed woods.

On a storm-night, there howled down the wind the long primordial cry of a wolf pack in full pursuit. As the cry circled down the Porcupine, Thor moved with the sound, keeping between the pack and the cabin. The pack drawing nearer, Thor's muttered growl increased to a deep throated challenge.

Awakened by his unknown guardian, Bailey glimpsed the black bulk in the half moonlight. Gun in hand, he noiselessly slid open the window. But the slightest sound was articulate to Thor's hearing. Bailey saw the proud erect head turn toward him, and the silver-gray tail standing out straight. Then he understood the mystery of the great wolf-pads along the trail and near the cabin. He knew that the high-held head and uplifted tail did not belong to a wolf.

BAILEY opened the door; the dog saw but did not move. Then the man's voice called low, caressingly. Rigid, his nose in the direction of the blood cry, Thor only uttered his fierce defy to the pack. Bailey stood beside the dog, the timbre of his mellowed voice a love note. Whining softly, his body quivering, Thor nosed the warm delightful odor of the man's hand, then moved a few feet in the direction of the howling pack.

He did not understand the man's repeated words:

"O, you beauty, you big black beauty." They were new words to him, but he understood the meaning of the voice; that quickened an inexpressible delight within, and caused every atom of his body to tremble with love-excitement.

In the shimmering light of that storm-night, with clouds racing across a white moon, and the long howl of the pack echoing close, began the clean love of a man and a dog. Thor knew Bailey; he recognized his faintest step at a distance. His smooth springing footfalls on the frost-laced trails imparted a character meaning to him. It was the man who had to learn the ways of dignified friendship, and the dog's love-madness.

On the afternoon of that first day, while cutting wood, Bailey was curiously amused when the dog seized a willow pole and lugged it to the woodpile. Thor's restless dodging about his feet as he wielded the ax did not cease until he had fashioned a harness and the dog became an eager participant in his labor, hauling wood to the cabin.

There began for Thor also, a new and joyous experience. He had been talked at and commanded, now the two-legged god he had found, talked *to* him.

"You big black fellow—do you know that she's such a little bird; she's my little lady-bird, and she's such a little woman. She lives way down there."

Thor saw the man pointing toward the south. It was always she, she, she, that he talked about.

"Do you understand, Mister Big-dog, that I have not seen my lady-bird for two years? And do you know that my little woman has a tiny living love-bit of me there, and I have never seen my little other self, not once?"

Laughingly then, the man would shake and jerk him back and forth in rough play until it seemed that Thor's heart would jump out of his body. In every conversation the man never forgot the wonderful She, and the little love-babe. And that in one more Summer he would go home to them.

It was heart-thudding joy to follow the man's heels; to rush pell-mell past him, a scurrying black demon in a cloud-swirl of snow, or, with his silvery-gray plume curled over his back, to pad proudly the trail before him.

Twice Thor journeyed the four miles to Fort Yukon. Bailey was amused to see how closely the dog guarded him on the trail, always keeping between a passing dog or man and himself.

On the second trip the man started home with slips of paper in his hand. He read them over and over, laughing the while and talking of the little woman and the tiny bit of love. Stopping on the trail, he held the mysterious slips of paper before the dog's eyes.

"You big jealous rascal, do you see these marks? They are my little lady-bird's love talk. Do you know what she says, right there? That says, 'My very own dearest Jim'; that's me, and, you strange

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dog, every line and between every line it says, 'Come, come, come home to your own little Jim and me, and my onliest'; that's me again, 'our babe is so round and strong, and he's growing fast as a weed.' Do you know what's right there?"

The man held the fluttering sheet of paper in front of the dog's nose. That says, "Good-by, my onliest Jim; God bring my brave, brave gold-seeker safe home."

With a throb in his voice that made the dog's heart ache and caused him to whine plaintively the man continued:

"Did you hear that, black dog? 'Brave, brave'; that isn't me. No, not a bit. I am not brave. She's such a little lonely woman, with a tiny babe, and she calls me brave. Think of that, will you."

When the man stood long, silently, his fine face turned to the south the dog pushed his nose into the man's half-opened hand. Speechless, Bailey regarded the dog for a time.

"God, you big dog, and they say you can't think or talk. Listen. In one more week we'll go up the Porcupine, and we'll find it this time. I know it's there. It's two hundred miles. We must find it for her. We'll try a new deal all around, old fellow."

"Listen, black pal, did you ever hear the story of the spider, who just kept trying and trying?" Thor waved his silver tail, blinked his big eyes and looked wise. "Lordy, don't you pretend now. You never saw a spider or heard of one. All the same, we will try again, and you will be my luck; that's why you came from God-only-knows-where, just from out of the dark, I guess, and followed me around for weeks."

Making preparations for the trip to his camp above Rampart House, on the Porcupine, Bailey was in town. Rounding the corner of the mission house, with Thor stalking at his heels, he was suddenly confronted by Takuthe George, the half-breed.

"Heem," George indicated the dog. "Where you catch heem? My dog. I pay for runaway dog, and heem not come."

He explained where the dog had come from, and how he came to own Thor. Bailey read between the lines and understood that he was not hearing the dog's story.

"I pay two caribou skins and one rat robe, wort two hundred, for dat Thor; and heem not come on; I feex heem."

The maneuvers of George for a half-hour, running after the wary Thor, under other circumstances, would have been highly amusing to Bailey; now the affair was tragic.

It was not alone the loss of the dog and his companionship that touched Bailey. Smitten with the utter loneliness of the limitless wild, discouraged and heart aching for those he loved, the dog had rekindled the old burning to succeed in his gold-quest; more than that, Thor had become to him a talisman of success.

Bailey's every offer to purchase the dog was met by a guttural—

"Nes-in-qua!" Emphatically, no.

Fearing that George might shoot Thor, and possessed of a psychic impression that the dog rightfully belonged to himself, and that he would ultimately possess him; Bailey called Thor and delivered him to the half-breed.

"Dat Thor —— good bad dog, I feex heem." Leading the dog, he disappeared.

IT WAS a month, the first of March, before Thor had an opportunity to escape. The half-breed knew well how to break a dog. Hard toil on the trail, fifty degrees below and half a dried fish once a day was a sure recipe.

Thor toiled and starved as only the wolf-dog can and yet survive. He could submit to the most merciless labor but he did not forget. The calling scent of the man-god, the heart-quaking ecstasy of the man's caressing hand, and the voice that melted him to loyal obedience remained a part of him.

On a morning, the first days of the wolf-month, when the south-rimmed sun had moved four hours farther north, the half-breed turned Thor loose with his teammates. Instantly, and in less time than it had required to unfasten the collar, Thor vanished from sight through the dark spruce woods.

Across the Flats to Fort Yukon was fifty miles. That night Thor circled Bailey's cabin on the Porcupine. Day and night he returned to the cabin in search of his idol. Always he avoided the settlement. Hunting up the wind, feeling out every life scent within miles of the place, Thor finally understood that Bailey had gone. He returned

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to the cabin less frequently. The wilderness became his master.

The woods and long sweeps of marsh to the north were many tongued with life. Experience added to his instinct and Thor became an expert killer. He grew more lean. His back broadened and his muscles hardened to sinew cords. The self-reliant days of the wild taught him more of the saber-like stroke of his ancestors. Every day opened for Thor the thrill of a new experience. He was a master beast in a world of life.

Thor did not know that he was a god-worshiper, more than a killer; that the blood in his veins was distilled to leap to the pleasure of a man. Often he dreamed of the hand touch of a man's heart.

Once before the velvet hand of Spring lay soft upon the land; Thor journeyed swiftly three days and nights to the cabin on the Porcupine. For an hour he lay before the cabin door, his nose between his outstretched paws. No answer came to his low whining call. He walked to the center of the clearing, sat down and pointing his muzzle upward, broke out the brooding howl of his loneliness. In another moment he had vanished into the black wall of woods, bearing steadily north.

Each day the sun rose earlier and set later. The murmur of awakening life rose from the earth. Thor hunted and traveled farther north, until he ranged along the arctic ridge. Sun-warmed winds fanned up from the south. Thor watched diagonal streamers and cunning wedges of ducks and geese against the arctic sky. The memory and hurt of love grew less, and the cabin on the Porcupine faded. He felt no longer the sudden panic to race south in search of the man-god who had dropped from his joy-filled life.

A day came in the short Summer when Thor was aroused from his easy life on the south slopes of the arctic rim, by an indefinable call. There was no heart-ache in it for a man. An objectless urge to travel possessed him. Immediate and so close was the call upon him that all desire to hunt or eat fled. Wide-eyed, ear-strung, the hair on his neck bristling, the strange unreasoning impulse gripped him.

The urge to go somewhere, anywhere, pressed until he swung out in ever-widening circles. Twice he returned to the spot from which he had started. On a wider circle swinging to the east, suddenly he stopped short, threw his muzzle up as if some scent attracted, and then true to the compass, he started due east. Around an extended spur of the range he traveled many miles south, but the mysterious impulse of direction drew him north again to an exact point opposite the place of détour. He circled lakes and traveled around great stretches of marsh but always kept to the east. The feverish urge pulled him as a laden bee to its hive, or the honking wild fowl to their nesting grounds.

On the fifth day the passion in him to travel grew less. By a stream flowing down from the north he rested a few hours, feasted on a fish, and then discovered that the impulse to migrate east had forsaken him. Aimlessly he padded up the stream a short distance, then as a scent came high to him on the wind he stiffened immovable like a pointer. Alarmed, every hair on his neck rose. Head held high, nose-feeling the scented breeze, he worked windward a mile east of the stream.

The scent grew more pungent as he advanced. A penetrating odor close to the ground caught his nose. Trembling, he darted forward. A piled-high barrier of windfall confronted him. He paused inhaling the immediate heavy scent filtering through the mass. Tonguing a human-like cry, he scrambled up over the tangled pile. Slowly, step by step as if pulled by a magnet he approached an inert object lying in the center of a cleared spot, surrounded by the high piles of down timber.

A HALF-HOUR later Jim Bailey was aroused from the stupor into which he had fallen by the plaintive crying of the dog. The dog's head and shining eyes close, appeared a dream figure. As Thor caressed his outstretched hand, Bailey dimly perceived the white of his breast. Half conscious he muttered:

"Thor, Thor, I guess; big dog, I wish you were here. I might pull out of this if—if—you—" The dream was cut short by Thor's cold nose and warm tongue caressing his face.

Bailey managed to brace himself up on one elbow. He cleared his vision with his free hand, and verified his returning clarity of mind by grasping the fur of the dog's neck.

"God, it has come true. How I have prayed. Big dog, every moment I have

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thought of you since I fell. Where is George? Why did you come? What freak of instinct pulled you to this spot?"

In childish babblings, his face white and drawn, Bailey talked to the dog, the fear in his countenance giving way to a pitiful smile.

Ten miles from his camp he had slipped from the top of the windfall. His foot wedging between two down trees in the fall, had broken his leg. Though he had succeeded in binding the broken limb to a sapling, and pressing the bone into place, he was unable to drag himself over the windfall. With the exception of a can of milk, he had had nothing to drink and little to eat during the five days since the accident.

Bailey's hope of rescue was aroused.

"Go get him. Go get him. Go fetch George." He repeated over and over to Thor. Waving his arm in the direction of the back track, Thor in short flights would rush over the pile of timber. Returning to Bailey to nose his hand as if trying to understand the mystery of his puzzling commands. Finally the dog disappeared. An hour later Bailey heard him returning beneath the jumble of uprooted trees. In vain he listened for sound of voices or approaching footsteps. He was astonished when he beheld Thor crawling from beneath the pile of timber lugging a big king salmon.

With a comical gravity Thor laid the salmon before Bailey, waving his tail as if he had succeeded in doing his bidding. Disappearing again beneath the windfall in a moment he returned dragging a willow pole. He repeated the operation until he had gathered a pile of sticks and limbs in the open near Bailey.

The mystery of Thor's appearance alone; his catching the salmon and bringing the fuel impressed Bailey strangely. What combination of fate and chance was this? Was it the directing hand of Providence? Could it be possible that some unknown psychic force had guided the dog across trackless miles to this pin-point in the wilderness, where he had lain five days, pain-racked and helpless?

He had eked out the last drops of milk in the can, hoping by some means to drag himself to the stream, a mile distant. Fevered with thirst, Bailey partly opened the end of the milk can and fastened it beneath Thor's neck.

In response to Bailey's commands Thor disappeared as before. It was two hours before the dog returned; when he did, he brought a two-pound pike, but the precious milk can was half full of water. Overcome with inexpressible emotion, Bailey drank, hugging the dog and calling him every pet name he could think of. He was not content to build a fire and roast fish until Thor had made another successful trip to the stream for water.

In seven days Bailey moved to the stream, and a week later found him at his cabin, ten miles north of the main Porcupine. Thor ranged the hills to the north, and the low-lying ground toward the Porcupine, supplying a variety of small game. Here, as Bailey's leg mended, the charming camaraderie of dog and man ripened to an utter faith.

Across vast solitudes, Jim Bailey had packed and panned, the lure of arctic treasure leading him finally up this unknown stream. Above a narrow cañon he had found shallow pay, the Summer before. He had picked up the yellow trace again in the Spring. On the rim of a bar he had washed out eight hundred in coarse gold. Two months of body-breaking toil failed to uncover the source from which the pay had come.

By canoe he had just completed a trip to Fort Yukon, at the mouth of the Porcupine, where he had exchanged dust for supplies. He had met George, the half-breed, when he settled for supplies with dust, and they had discussed the possibility of placer on the upper Porcupine. Resentment rankling sore in his mind kept him silent about Thor.

With the assistance of a crutch, Bailey spent days of his convalescence snooping up the narrowing stream. Thor's eyes were constantly on his every motion. When Bailey turned over boulders, the dog proceeded to excavate beneath rocks on his own account, and when he dug prospect holes, Thor's big paws worked at the same occupation, tearing up the gravel at a furious rate. With head cocked speculatively, Thor examined the gravel and dirt in the gold-pan, with a miner-like attention that was hugely amusing to Bailey.

CEASELESSLY he toiled to wrest the secret of the gold from an infinitude of earth. Morning, noon and night, as he dug and panned, and in breathing spells between, Bailey talked to his

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"big dog pal" of his "lady-bird and the little-bit-of-love," for whom they toiled.

Search as he might, panning, always panning in the ice water, not a rough speck of gold could he discover above the bar that had yielded eight hundred in a few hours' work. Could it be possible that the discovery ended with this detached pocket? Thor seemed to sense Bailey's periods of depression. He dug more frantically in the wash, scouting around in busy imitation of Bailey as he sifted the river bed.

The walls of the cañon were so close that it seemed he had combed every inch for possible pay along the stream. Days came when Bailey remained in camp, feeling the futility of his pigmy efforts to fathom the treasure secret.

Frost stiffened the earth, and the narrow stream dwindled. Diamond scintillating days tinged with saffron touched every leaf and blade with color. As the stream subsided, Bailey prospected more closely the wash and bedrock near the discovery that he had worked out. Lunching one noonday, when he had completed a lower cut on the bar, Thor's "Yep, yep," came to him once in a while, from a narrow ledge twenty feet above the stream.

Bailey called—

"Come, you foolish fellow, let's lay off work. Let's quit the whole diggings for keeps, and go home." Thor did not respond with his usual bounding, tail-wagging, eye-dancing hilarity. He appeared at the edge of the rocks above, yapping at Bailey as much as to say—

"Wait a minute, I am developing a placer prospect on top of these rocks."

Waving his hand at the black head and laughing red tongue showing over the rim, Bailey piled together pick, shovel and gold-pan, examined a ragged piece of rust stained quartz, and called to the dog again. After a wait he caught sight of Thor gingerly picking his way down from the bank. He slowly padded across the shallow stream and rock strewn river bed to where Bailey stood.

"You black scoundrel, what foolishness have you been up to now?"

Confronting Bailey, peering up with inquiring eyes he dropped a rock at his feet. Not an unusual proceeding. A score of times a day he had done the same thing, and Bailey often shammed intense interest in the rocks, to Thor's unmistakable delight.

Playing the game of pretended interest, Bailey was surprized to notice a rust-stained, honeycombed formation on one side of the rock, similar to that which he had observed in quartz pieces on the bar. Turning the rock over the light fell full on a spider-leg of pure yellow metal, twisted into the quartz.

The cold deliberateness with which Bailey examined the stringer of gold did not reveal the electric shock that ran through him. Wide-eyed, for a space he stood regarding the narrow bench opposite. He dared not permit himself to believe that the rainbow-end of his dreams lay there where his Black Pal had been "tom-fooling." His laugh was mirthless, and his voice sounded hollow as he talked to the dog.

Not until he had climbed to the ledge did he discover that he had brought neither pick nor shovel. The ledge was wider than he expected. A number of glacier-scarified boulders all but filled the shelf-like bench. With joy contorted leaps Thor disappeared behind two great boulders close to the cañon wall. When Bailey reached the dog he was head and shoulders in a hole, yapping loudly and pawing out a shower of dirt, gravel and broken rocks. The shelf was some twenty feet across, and had evidently held a special attraction for Thor, for there were freshly dug mounds of rubble all about.

KNEELING beside the dog, a gleam of yellow in the dirt caught his eye. It was a shattered piece of quartz, wired and nuggeted with pure gold. A double handful of the finer dirt was filled with coarse flakes, and scraps of gold-threaded rock.

Thor watched the dazed behavior of his master as he thrust his hands into holes, digging out handfuls of yellow-specked earth. Charmed into dumbness by what he beheld, Bailey slowly scrutinized the shallow glacier pocket, yellow-jeweled with gold.

Then the man broke. The pent longings of toil-years in the North found voice in his shouts and hysterical laughter. On his knees he pulled and tumbled the dog about in a wild passion of delight. Unashamed he wept for joy, hugging Thor in his arms. With wild leaps Thor joined in the mad celebration.

His sober self again, Bailey called the dog.

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"Come on, you black dog; let's mush down to the cabin and think this all over, before the stuff gets into our blood again."

Bailey selected two chunks of gold-stuccoed quartz and started. Then as if sobered thought halted him, he stopped.

"No, Mister Big-dog, we'll not take a single speck of the glad stuff down there with us. Tomorrow we will open up your 'tom-fool' mine, and then we will go on a gold jamboree, but today we'll keep sober.

"Come on, you old miner, let's mush home. I'll tell you just how we will go to our little bird and my little Jim, as soon as ever we can."

Thor divined that something of tremendous importance had occurred, and held his head a trifle more proudly erect as he padded the trail to the cabin.

In a week Bailey had panned the pocket, and was scraping crevices for the last flakes of gold. The deposit was less extensive than he had calculated but made up in richness. He valued the moose-skin pokes and cans of dust at not less than thirty thousand.

It was a health-bubbling man and a joy-bounding dog that threaded their way across the river bottom and up a cañon, on a final hunt in preparation for the trip down the river. They had packed part of their outfit to the main Porcupine, ten miles below the cabin.

On the third day's hunt, Thor winded and still tracked two wood-caribou. Within easy packing distance of their cache on the Porcupine, they made the kill.

They had covered half the distance from the Porcupine to the cabin, when Bailey was startled by Thor's odd behavior. He was marching proudly ahead when suddenly, with a snarl, and hair bristling, he began racing back and forth on the seldom used trail. The fierce convulsive temper of the dog could mean nothing less than the trail of a grizzly. After traveling a short distance Thor disappeared in the direction of the cabin, and when he reappeared, a half hour later, his whole demeanor was strangely changed.

Hesitating and halting on the trail, Thor followed slowly, and then only at Bailey's command. He could understand Thor's angry agitation, but his cowering silence carried an indefinable meaning. Like a chill a distressing fear communicated to Bailey. He hastened, his mind on the gold he had cached in the cabin floor.

What unseen thing was this that the dog's invading faculties had plucked out of trackless space? In the two years that Bailey had prospected up the stream from the Porcupine, few men had broken its solitudes.

Thor at his heels, Bailey swung across the river bottom toward the cabin. He viewed the surroundings with an impression that something he did not identify was lacking. At the edge of the clearing, a hundred yards from the cabin Bailey paused, his attention held by the dog's whining protest at going farther. Every bush, limb and rock of the surroundings were as familiar to him as the lines in his hands, yet he was almost upon the threshold of the cabin before his sense of sight rested on the vacancy before him. It was as if the ground had silently opened and the cabin had vanished before his eyes.

OF THE camp, a heap of ashes, a fire-warped stove, some tools and a shed built against the rocks only remained. Incredulously Bailey stared at the ruins. In one single instance the whole situation fell upon him like a stroke. The gold was gone; he would have been astonished if his examination had revealed the dust where he had cached it.

The plunderers had left not a sign. For hours Bailey searched the trail and surroundings. Only at the bench did he find signs of footprints. He made camp that night in the shed. Too well he knew the futility of searching the trackless waste for the perpetrator of this injury. The Porcupine was the only highway out of the country, and he entertained but slight hope of discovering a clew to the robbery there. After making a late supper he found that Thor had disappeared.

When Bailey awoke in the morning, a cold sun shone above the teeth of the range. Looking out from the open shed, the first object to meet his sight was Thor coming into view from down the trail. The dog stopped at the edge of the clearing, nose-felt the air a moment, then the long-drawn death-song of the malemiut echoed through the silence. Shivering at the dismal wail, Bailey felt that Thor was voicing a requiem for his tragically blighted hopes. For a day Bailey drove his canoe up the

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Porcupine, from the recently established cache, searching for signs of a camp or travel. On the second day he moved camp three miles down stream.

Thor's actions were unaccountable. Always he had been a busy, frolicking partner in whatever Bailey did; now he was strangely indifferent. With tail and head low he furtively shadowed his master. In spite of all he could do the dog would not enter the canoe.

Newly formed shore ice and floating skims in the current warned Bailey that his search must be brief. The heartless glory of the great North shone upon him like cold brass as he prepared to leave for Fort Yukon. The very silence was gruesome. Paddling slowly down stream, Thor followed within sight along the bank. Later in the forenoon, in the crook of a wide bend, he set up such a howling protest at following farther that Bailey returned to investigate. Gun in hand, he had scarcely set foot on shore until the dog started up the stream. When he turned due north away from the Porcupine, Bailey searched in vain for signs of a landing or a camp.

Without hesitation Thor led the way directly north across an open marsh, where the impress of travel, in the long grass, would have been plainly discernible. Three miles or more, through patches of timber and across marshes Bailey gained not the slightest hint as to where the dog was leading him or why. That mysterious sixth sense of orientation, that guides the carrier-pigeon on a line to its cote, seemed pulling the dog straight.

Suddenly, halting on the edge of an opening Thor threw his nose in the air, and turned toward a black bank of spruce, at a right angle to the north course they were traveling. Nearing the woods a gust of overpowering rage swept him. Quivering in every line he raced back and forth before Bailey, growling with terrible ferocity.

Gun ready, cautiously Bailey advanced. Beneath a thick shelter of overhanging spruce Thor poised stock still. There was a low snarl in his throat and he refused to advance at Bailey's whispered urging. In the deep shadow moments passed before he discerned that which Thor, frozen to a rigid point, indicated. At another pace he looked into the disarray of what he, at first, took to be a deserted camp. Boldly advancing, the tension of the moment snapped. The color fled from Bailey's face.

Spread out before him was unspeakable tragedy. He read, fresh written on the ground, the marks of a shocking thing.

Sightless eyes, staring wide, terror-graven lines visible in death—Bailey gazed on a blood-smeared face. There had been a desperate fight against a whirlwind of death. The man's clothes were almost stripped from his body. Ten feet away lay a large caliber revolver, with three chambers emptied. Gaping, crimson, the whole side of the man's throat had been torn out. Every object in the camp appeared to be splashed with blood.

Looking to where Thor stood at the edge of the death camp, silent, his lips curled back from his great white fangs, he recalled the dog's every movement since that fateful afternoon when they returned to find the cabin burned and the gold gone. He understood the cause of the dog's anger at the vicious scent he had picked up on the trail. In mind, he followed the dog's movements that night when he left camp. He shuddered at the gruesome facts, and remembered Thor's death-call on the edge of the clearing, when he returned in the morning.

The two closely bound packs, there in the red confusion held his own hard won gold. The dead plunderer proved to be Jack Matson. Bailey surmized that brutality, tragically twisted into Thor's past, had rebounded upon Matson in righteous retribution.

Nosing eastward, a short distance along a freshly defined trail, Thor led Bailey to find the complement of Matson's treachery and cowardice. Beneath the dark trees, on the trail where he had been struck down from behind, lay George the half-breed, with two bullet holes in his back. Death had touched George quickly as he led the way.

Bailey thought of the even-handed justice that had overtaken the murderer; and Matson's treachery that had made possible his immediate death.

IN A far western city, where the Pacific tempers the air to perpetual Springtime, there is a beautiful black dog who often pads the streets or rides with a tall, clean-faced man. The

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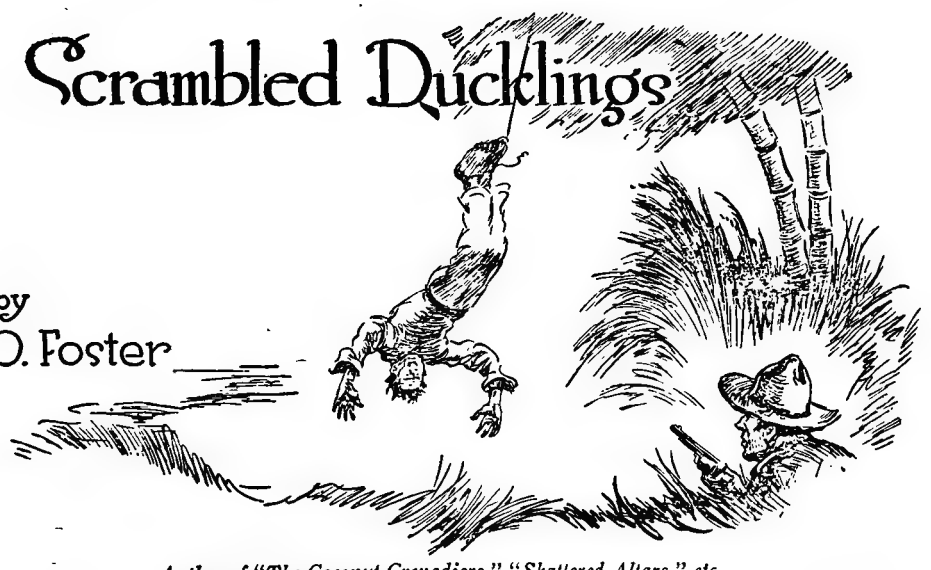
man calls him his "Big-dog," his "Black-pal," his "Old-Sourdough-miner." In the home of the man and his "Little Lady-bird" there is a blue-eyed boy, whose head barely reaches the top of the great dog's back.

Any day, you may see a curly head bobbing along beside a proudly happy dog, who has found a new Pal.

Scrambled Ducklings

by E. O. Foster



Author of "The Coconut Grenadiers," "Shattered Altars," etc.

"Addled eggs is like addled pates; ye niver know whot's inside till ye crack 'em."—OLD SPUD.

QU-A-CK, quack, quack, qu-ack! Qu-a-ck, quack, quack, qu-ack! Qu-a-ck! Qu-a-ck! Qu-ack!"

It was hatching time at Pateros and the myriad ducks that gave the little village nestling on the Pasig River its name were working overtime to send their quota of young ducklings to the Oriente market in Manila, where they would be dried and smoked and then rushed across the China Sea to fill the rotund stomachs of the better class Cantonese to repletion.

Down at the river's brink where Señora Salarina's big stone house sat perched on a knoll like one of her ducks on its nest, a group of "doughboys" belonging to the Second Battalion of the —teenth U. S. Infantry were grouped around a battered and worn *banca*, a kind of native canoe hollowed from a solid log. It had just been lowered from its cradle behind the big doors which swung across the front of the carriage shed which made up the eastern third of the Señora's house. In it lay Señor Cinco, her husband, and around him, packed in native cotton, and covered with blankets, were dozens and dozens of duck eggs.

There was a creaking of tackle within and two other canoes were lowered from their cradles on each side of the shed and trundled out to lay beside Cinco's in the shade of the tall bamboos edging the river. These canoes also had human occupants, who, like Cinco, were crippled veterans of the Insurgent army, unable to work on lake or farm. It was time for the morning "turning." With infinite care Salarina and her hunchback nephew, Dominico, moved the packing so that the human incubators could leave their nest and hobble around until the eggs were sprinkled and turned, after which they would resume their task. When twilight fell they would again be hoisted safely out of the reach of snakes and other midnight marauders.

Salarina was descended from a former Spanish governor-general who had found her maternal grandmother much to his liking. The house on the hill was an heir-loom from her ancestress who had lived and died in Pateros. Constructed to suit the vacation needs of the old don, it had several secret passages, and a cockpit, cleverly fitted in a small cellar under the carriage house.

Salarina, an ardent patriot, kept the knowledge of pit and hidden passages from the American forces; and it was here that

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General Hilar, commanding the Insurgent forces in the Pateros region, met with Aguinaldo and his emissaries to plot death and destruction to Uncle Sam's soldiers.

Rumors of these meetings had reached general headquarters at Manila, and Major John T. Morphy, commanding the battalion, had received orders to use every means in his power to capture Hilar when next he visited Pateros. The major, known throughout the American forces as "Old Spud," was in "official" disgrace.

A few weeks before he had broken up the Katipunan Society at Los Banos, killing the high priest, Juan de Jesus, and two score of his underlings, just in time to save his son, Lieutenant Lawrence Morphy, whom old Juan was about to offer as a sacrifice to the gigantic python god of the order.

The shattered remnant of the Katipunan had vowed vengeance on the major and his battalion. Through underground channels they had caused the major to be relieved of his command at Los Banos "in the interests of that harmony already established between the civil government and the more intelligent of the native population." The commanding general's objection to this interference with his troops had been overruled by Washington, which at that time was lending a most willing ear to the "anti-everything" crowd at Boston, so the major and his battalion were moved to Pateros, and —— was to pay.

"Oh, get in your tunics,
Slick your hair with pomade,
And shine up your buttons
It's time for parade—
In Full Dress."

Bugler Titus, newly joined, was sounding "First Call." The khaki-clad group around the canoes did not start for their tents with the usual speed, for the last three notes calling for "Full Dress" signaled the parade for the funeral of Tommy Rice, Company "E," bugler orderly to the commanding officer, the first victim of the feud.

All drill and fatigue had been suspended at the post in respect to the most popular field musician in the regiment, and the men had loafed, and would loaf, until the last honors had been paid their late comrade.

Fifteen minutes later, a squad of picked men hoisted the flag-covered casket on to their shoulders and followed the guard down the narrow streets to the wharf where the river gunboat *Napindan* was waiting to carry all that was left of the little bugler to the government cemetery at Manila.

Every officer and man not on duty was in ranks behind the pall-bearers, but there was no sign of the usually inquisitive native population along the line of march. Just as the procession came in sight of the wharf the doors to the hatching yards on each side of the street were thrown open and hundreds of ducks, driven forth by their owners, ran squawking and quacking beneath the feet of the battalion. It was the last and crowning insult.

"Stiddy in the ranks, min, stiddy, I say!" Old Spud side-swiped an old drake as he turned to pass the word to his battalion adjutant. He stumbled and nearly fell. Ordinarily he would have loosed the floodgates of his wrath on the heads of his beloved "Siccond," but his heart was heavy, and with a low growl he told his adjutant to fall out and make a note of the owners of the property from which the ducks had been driven.

The head of the column reached the *Napindan;* the troops were lined up in battalion front; and, after the old gunboat swung into the stream, the battalion was held at "salute" until she swung around the bend near Pasig on her voyage to Manila, after which the men were dismissed, the officers slowly making their way back to headquarters for the usual morning conference.

EVER since the battalion had returned from Los Banos the attitude of the native population had been sullen and hostile. The men were fired on while at drill by insurgents hidden in the outlying hills; sentries were slashed by bolo men who paraded through the town in the white suits supposed to mark the friendly native; the spring from which the command drew its water supply had been unspeakably polluted on several occasions, and to cap the climax, the body of Tommy Rice had been found at daybreak in the bamboo-bordered path which circled from the priest's house to the spring and from there back to the big square in the center of the town.

His toes had been caught in a noose formed by twisted grass and he had fallen striking a sharpened peg whose bloody point was protruding from the base of his skull when his comrades picked him up. Death had been instantaneous.

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The battalion had vowed vengeance that morning, was loud in its plans for revenge; but the duck incident had added to the fires of hatred until they blazed in satanic wrath. Company "E" said nothing. They would wash their dirty linen in their own way, and woe betide the Filipino caught in their mangle. The non-coms. met and it was only the thought that to wipe out the duck breeders would surely result in further annoyance for their commander that kept them from leading their men in an attack.

That night the company twins, Corporals Ray and Peter Morey, opened "E's" campaign of reprisal, bending down the big bamboos along the path and fastening to them giant snares of heavy copper wire, similar to the smaller ones with which they had trapped rabbits in the hills of Pennsylvania before they had answered the call of Uncle Sam at the outbreak of the war with Spain.

The twins worked fast, Ray shinnying up one of the bamboos until his weight caused it to bend its feathery head to the earth several yards beyond the path, then Peter threw a rope over it and made it fast to a toggle-trigger hidden in the grassy border. Next he strung a fine wire, knee-high across the path, one end fastened to a stake and the other to the trigger, and under it spread the snare, its two ends held lightly by small pegs. The free end running through the noose was tied to the rope above the toggle.

A peculiar thing about this form of trap is that it closes on its victim according to the place the trigger wire is hit, the pegs holding down the end furthest from the toggle until ripped out by the spring of the bamboo, the noose closing diagonally. The twins set three of these man-catchers before moonset and stole quietly back to their tent.

Old Spud also had his idea of how the situation should be handled, but his recent experience with the underground wires of native intrigue had made him a bit cautious. He had forbidden his officers to take any action, saying he would handle the matter alone. He knew how to stop the "dirty divvil thot hod caused the dith of the bist bugler in the ar-rmy, and ther'd be no witnesses to carry the tale to the fat mon at the hid o' the civvil governmint aither!"

"Taps" found the old veteran seated at the window of the room in the priest's house, his eyes glued on the entrance to the path leading to the spring, his heavy Colt's revolver ready for action. As the hours dragged by he grew sleepy and nodded, his head falling forward on the holstered weapon resting on the window sill. He awoke with a start just in time to glimpse a dusky figure creeping down the path.

WIDE-AWAKE in a second, the major worked quietly down the stairs and into the path. In the morning twilight he could see the native, who had finished tying his first noose, rise and set the point of a stake in the center of the path, driving it firmly with a small leather-tipped mallet. A few quick slashes with his bolo, shaving the stake to a lance-like point, and the plotter hurried forward to set another of his diabolical contrivances.

Old Spud moved to the shadows of the bamboos and followed on his trail. Soon he dropped on his knees, and pistol raised, began to creep up on the kneeling native, just finishing another of his man-killers. The native must have heard the major's approach, for he jumped suddenly to his feet and turned to run.

There was a sharp "click" as he hit one of the Moreys' traps and the released trigger flew in a semicircle at the end of the wire. There was a long "swis-h-h" as the native, caught around the ankles by the heavy copper snare, was flung high by the spring of the released bamboo, to drop backward to earth, and up again, and down again, and up again, and so on, until he came to a jiggling halt, and slowly turned, head downward, from side to side in decreasing half circles.

"Howly Saint Patrick! Up in the air wan minit and down agin the nixt." The major came closer to the swinging figure.

"——, and 'tis thot —— hunchback of Salarina's thot's bin up to all the diviltry. I'll taich him!" For a moment Dominico was close enough to Death to pull the old boy's whiskers, but the major thought better of it and decided to let the hangman in Manila take care of the hunchback later, and in the meantime it might be possible to use Dominico to get to the bottom of the plotting at Pateros.

The major began circling the trap, the native muttering prayers in Tagalog as fast as his scattered senses would permit. He saw the revolver, which the major still carried above his head at the position of "ready," and for a second was quiet.

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"I'll show ye—" There was another "click" and another "swish," and to the accompaniment of a rattling volley of curses, the major, who had sprung a second trap at its inner end, was jerked into the air, to be snapped back and forth until he, too, came to a halt, the tips of his army brogans just touching the grass along the edge of the path. Fortunately for him he was caught head up, his pistol arm just clear of the noose.

"—— to —— and sivin hands round! If I iver catch up wid the man who tied these baistly wires to the whale-poles I'll sthrip his hoide!" Dominico recommenced his muttering. Old Spud thought he was swearing. "Ye shut yer hide or I'll blow it opin wid me forty-foive. I'll taich the loikes o' yez to droive spoikes fer me poor byes to fall upon, ye grass-tyin', fish-eatin', egg-suckin' son-of-a-biskit! Shut yer lid now, I say, or I'll blow the little sinse ye have out o' it."

The major attempted to free himself from the noose, but each movement set him to jiggling again and he would not drop his revolver so that he could use his free hand. He knew a better way than that. He would scare the native with a little target practise and at the same time call the guard. Quick as a flash he threw down on the sharpened peg just below the native.

"Crack!" There was a spurt of fire from his pistol, and the peg, struck fair at its base hopped from the ground as if possessed. A shower of gravel flicking the ever-reddening face of Dominico, hanging half suffocated, less than ten inches above the path.

"Crack!" Another bullet cut the knot of grass and ricocheted away in the hills.

"Crack!" The major had turned his revolver upward and his third missile struck the bamboo just at the joint where the snare was made fast. The slender tree, its sides riven by the impact, bent its head prone upon the ground. Old Spud was in fine humor as he freed himself from the noose. He had given the alarm and extricated himself from a rather undignified position before the guard arrived. Then he remembered.

"—— him! Double —— him!! He's spiled me picnic. Double —— him, the pair o' thim!" Old Spud's plan had gone wrong. He was sore as a pestered wasp. He glanced up at the broken bamboo. "Thot —— jerk-ye-to-Hiv'n-and-drop-ye-to- —— contrivance is some of his foine wor-ruk. Ivry toime 'tis mesilf thot has the plan, and ivry toime 'tis Carparal Morey, first or siccond, bad cess to thim, thot breaks those same plans all to —— and laves me to be the —— goat. I'll stand it no long——"

THE pounding of many feet near the priest's house attracted the major's attention. He hurried in that direction just in time to halt a detachment of the guard before they hit Dominico's first trap. A second later, a squad from Company "E," headed by Corporal Ray Morey, charged down the path from the spring. Forgetful of the snares he had helped set the night before, Morey hit the third one dead in the center, and was jerked from in front of his astonished men to swing head and heels down, describing the same arcs and semi-circles as had the major and Dominico, except that it was now broad daylight and there was an ever-increasing crowd of spectators, already howling with glee at the corporal's predicament.

"Howly sufferin' cats! Look at thot now, Mr. Miles! Jist look at thot!" The adjutant had joined the commanding officer. "'Tis a foine specimin of a non-com. we have before us, twirlin' in the air billy down, a-wavin' his ar-rms and ligs like a hula-hula dancer. Jist see thot he's cut down at wanst, and lit him march his min back to quarthers while we interview this —— hunchbacked rabbit a-hangin' here. Sargint, whot the —— are yez doin' there? Nothin' did yez say? Will jist git a hump on ye and mar-rch yer min back to the gyard where ye belong. Wait a bit, wait a bit; sind me up two min from "E" at wanst, wid Sargint Luttge."

When Luttge arrived Dominico was already unconscious; the rush of blood to his head and the terror induced by the major's marksmanship had been too much for him. The men carried him to the spring and Luttge dashed water on him until he struggled back to consciousness in the midst of a dream that he was taking the water cure.

An hour later, stubbornly silent, he got what he had been dreaming about until he poured forth water from nose and mouth like a fountain, and with it came the story of Salarina's treachery, and of a meeting of high insurgent officials to be held in her

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house that night. He also told of the hidden cockpit and secret tunnelings. Then he was taken to the hospital and got into shape for his trip to Manila where he would be tried for the murder of Tommy Rice.

Old Spud and his officers were jubilant. Dominico's confession had shown them the way to turn the tables on the wily insurgent general and restore the battalion to the good graces of the civil governor. The word was passed to the older "non-coms." and a picked squad of the best men in the battalion were detailed for the work in hand. At dusk that evening when Cinco took his usual stroll he was escorted to the guard-house as soon as he had passed beyond the vision of his watchful spouse. Corporal Peter Morey, his face and arms dyed brown, slipped into Cinco's suit of white and hobbled back to take his place in the canoe.

In the evening dusk the substitution was not noticed, and after the eggs had been safely packed around him he was covered with blankets and was swung, with the canoe, to its accustomed place in the shed, after which the big doors were swung shut and the false floor covering the cockpit lifted to the ceiling by the same tackle which was used to raise and lower the canoes.

Looking down from his canoe Morey could see the dim outlines of the cellar-like pit, three sides fitted with terraced seats like those in a stadium. The blank wall at the rear of the pit was covered by a screen of coconut fiber which concealed a door opening into a deep gully just behind the house.

It was masked by the lush tropical grass, which had been left to increase in peace in the otherwise trim garden. A heavy table, surrounded by rattan chairs occupied the center of the pit, hiding a trap-door covering the entrance to one of the hidden passages.

"Tatto" sounded, and later "Taps." Villager and soldier dropped to sleep, only the guard in its ceaseless rounds disturbing the quiet of the tropical night. Salarina sat in sleepless vigil at a window of the big house which commanded a view of the Pasig. Up at headquarters Major Morphy and his picked detail were ready for the sentry's call that would signal the entrance of the plotters into the trap he had prepared for them.

Had he only known that Dominico had not "come clean" in his confession he might have had a chance to end the Insurrection then and there; for all the time, Don Emilio Aguinaldo, who had entered the village earlier that morning in the garb of a native fisherman, had been waiting in Salarina's home for his conference with General Hilar and the head of his secret service—a native lawyer upon whom the civil government relied most implicitly, not knowing that he was an officer in the insurgent army.

MIDNIGHT came. Quiet as ghosts slim canoes stole along in the shadows edging the river to draw under the dock and poke their noses against the bank from which it jutted. Silently, timing their movements so that the sentry on duty at the water-front had his back turned toward them, General Hilar and four of his officers, slunk from beneath the dock and stole across the road to disappear in the shadows of the big shed, whose door, moved by a pulley in the hands of Salarina opened silently to receive them and closed as silently when they were inside. They stepped down the terraced seats and took their places at the council table, dimly lighted by a taper floating in a glass of coconut oil.

Morey heard them pass beneath his canoe and eased himself into a position where he could watch the proceedings. He recognized General Hilar and his aid, having seen them at rather close quarters in the Laguna campaign three months before, but the other officers were strangers to him. There was a slight tapping, seemingly coming from the floor of the pit.

The officers gathered around the table sprang to their feet, moved it to one side, and lifted a trap-door from which emerged a snappy-looking young Filipino, wearing the stars of a full general. Morey could hardly believe his eyes, but there was no mistaking the newcomer's identity. It was Aguinaldo, president of the so-called Filipino republic and commanding general of its army, who had again shoved his head in the lion's mouth that he might confer with his most trusted general. The trap-door was lowered into place and Aguinaldo took his seat at the head of the table, motioning to the other officers to be seated, and the conference was on.

Morey was in a quandary. Here was the biggest game he or any other man in the American army could hope to capture. It

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was certain that the plan as laid down by Major Morphy would result in the capture of one or more of the plotters, but it was also certain that any of them would give his life to protect the liberty of the head of the insurgent forces. The slightest slip in plans and the net, when pulled, would only have the smaller fish, the minnows, while the big one escaped.

He eased the revolver in the holster under his shoulder and made ready to take one shot, hit or miss, orders or no orders, if it should be necessary to prevent Aguinaldo's escape when the major closed in on the house. Then he lay quietly watching, waiting for the signal.

Outside, the sentry's "Who goes there?" told of the officer of the guard making his rounds. Inside, Aguinaldo and his subordinates sat plotting the destruction of the United States' forces, and especially, Major Morphy and his battalion. Morey, with his limited knowledge of Spanish and Tagalog, had to listen closely to get the outlines of it. Poisoned wells, spring guns, staked paths and pits, and as a last resort, incendiary fires were to be used to the utter annihilation of the hated invaders.

The lawyer aide, who displayed the serpent sign of the new head of the Katipunan in the bracelet on his wrist, told how he had hoodwinked the civil government into demanding that Major Morphy be relieved of his command at Los Banos, and of the threat of the Jamaica negress, wife of the former high priest of the order, that she would kill the old veteran before the month was out.

Again the sentry's challenge, and a muffled response in the voice of Old Spud came to Morey's ears. Below, the plotters continued the hatching of their ugly schemes. Above Morey lay wondering if the major would time his entrance on the scene so as to capture Aguinaldo, or if the insurgent chieftan would be able to make one of those quick "getaways" for which he was noted. It was evident that the conference was nearly over.

Suddenly, from the hills to the east of the town, a detachment of insurgents opened up with their Mausers. He could hear the sentries on the outlying posts give the alarm. The rushing of the companies to strengthen the outposts rose clearly above the noise of the enemy's fire, then the steady volley firing of the Americans as they swept the hills in vain endeavor to still the insurgent guns. Aguinaldo did not seem disturbed, and joked with General Hilar about his strategy in drawing the Americans from the village when it was time for the conference to end, and the plotters to depart.

Suddenly, a huge timber, swung like a battering ram, shore through the hidden door in the rear wall, knocking it from its hinges. Old Spud had not been fooled by the attack. He had his nose on the scent of Hilar, and good old war dog that he was, he would stick to it till Hilar was captured or killed. He rushed into the pit, but not quick enough to catch the wily Aguinaldo, who at the first sound of the ram had lifted the trap-door, dived into the tunnel and made his way to the river and safety.

AS HE lifted the trap the other insurgents began a rush up the terrace steps just as Morey, leaning far over the side of his canoe, tried to throw a shot at Aguinaldo. The canoe tilted, spoiling his aim, and his bullet cut the tackle at the rear of the false floor letting it drop downward and forward, sweeping the incoming soldiers in a heap in the center of the pit; then the canoe, thrown from its cradle by his weight, spilled him and his dozens and dozens of eggs, and came tumbling after the unlucky non-com. The fugitives were knocked in all directions. Half hatched ducklings were spread all over the seats, a few bad eggs adding to the gaiety of the odors.

Half way down the pit, the canoe skidded at one end, made a giant flip-flop, and buried Major Morphy in the reeking mess still clinging to its bottom. In one corner lay General Hilar, knocked half unconscious by the impact of Morey's right shoulder as he fell upon him, mechanically attempting to wipe the remains of what had once been a perfectly good egg from his draggling mustache. His staff lay in the corner, mixed with the men of the detachment.

Morey had stopped the exodus all right. He sat on the big *narra* table that had stopped his fall, gazing in astonishment at the tiny blaze from the wick in the coconut oil lamp still jouncing from the impact of his arrival. One arm hung useless by his side but the big Colt was still firmly grasped in his right hand. He swung on the table until he was able to cover the squirming mass of Americans and insurgents in the corner and

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awaited developments, and awaiting he began to think quicker than he had ever thought before in his life. Smeared as he was with the reeking mess, the major forgot they had captured the much desired Hilar; and there was the fire of Celtic rage in his eye.

Morey saw the major struggling from beneath the canoe. He glanced at the bespattered insignia on his sleeve. He did not want to be "busted." He saw the major approaching the table, blood in his eye. He must fool him, and he lifted up his voice and began to sing, beating time on the table with the butt of the Colt. The song was made up on the spur of the minute, that is, the words were. The tune was one that he had learned at school. He sang it with a will, while officer and private, captor and captured, struggling from their ill-scented nightmare, listened in amazement, regardless of the noise of the skirmish still going on outside the town. It began:

Addled eggs upon the sergeant,
Upon his two-score men;
A scrambled duck in the major's hair—
He smells far worse than them!

"Howly Sufferin' Cats! 'Tis crazy th' bye is!" Old Spud stood with open mouth as Morey continued, his eyes held by the sweep of the big revolver as it marked time between stanzas.

Addled eggs upon the earthen floor
Of many a changing hue;
And half-hatched eggs strewn all about
With ducklings peeping through.

"Iss it to beleef—" Old Pills Reichmann, battalion surgeon, had arrived, "iss it to beleef, mein lieber Morphy, dot you iss by such a foolishness deceived?" Old Pills looked carefully into the eyes of the singer. Their pupils were of equal size. There was no contusion in sight on the head. He felt sure Morey was faking to escape the major's wrath, and was not backward in saying so. But the singer continued his song, changing the rhythm and the music to suit a new whimsy that had taken possession of his pate:

Old Pills Reichmann's an awful slick man,
Gives the boys salts whenever he can;
Salts for the soldiers covered with ducks,
Old Pills Reichmann ain't worth shucks.

"Ach, du lieber Gott, it iss a case most strange." The surgeon held a flashlight close to Morey's unwinking eyes. The singer kept up his chant. "It is myself dot der strange case *gefunden* hass. I must him at once to der hospital take."

The firing had died away. The play was over and his broken arm was crying for attention. Carefully supported by the surgeon and his brother, Ray, Morey's unsteady legs bore him slowly to the hospital, where he was installed in a snowy cot, his arm swathed in splints and bandages, and a card marked "For Observation" hung at the foot of his bed. Later when Old Spud came to see him, he told the old veteran of Aguinaldo's presence at the conference and of his attempt to stop his escape. Fresh from a bath, clean as a hound's tooth in his evening uniform of white, Old Spud had forgotten his temper, and was jubilant at the capture of Hilar and the exposure of the lawyer-spy.

"Yis, yis, me bye, I saw the tail of the divvil's coat as he slid down thot —— trap. I was jist raisin' me gun to take a shot at 'im whin thot —— flure druv me forrad jist in time to connict with thot inkybater. Thin I forgot all ilse till I came to and saw ye perched on thot table, swingin' a gun at the —— *gugus* wid one hand, a-poundin' on the table wid the butt of it betoimes, and a singin' away as if possessed awl o' th' toime.

"I was jist waitin' to see if ye would try to continue yer —— deception, and I'm proud to say ye didn't, Sargint Morey. Yis, yis, I know I said sargint, and I meant it, but git a hump on ye and git out o' this hospital before I fergit and till that brither o' yours to sew 'em on by mistake loike."

Morey spied the surgeon approaching. Quietly he began to sing—to sing again the verse about "Old Pills Reichmann." It was too much for Old Spud. He edged toward the door, his shoulders heaving with laughter. He turned just in time to hear Morey's faint "Qu-a-ck" as the surgeon began to take his pulse.

"——, whot a tale to till the giniral whin I git to Manila tomorry." But already it was tomorrow, the first faint pencilings of the sun marking the birth of a new day, and a happier period for the commander of the "Siccond Battalion," who had General Hilar safe in his clutches.

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The Exterminator

A Complete Novelette

by J. Allan Dunn

Author "No Man's Island," "The Moon Master," etc.

THE watch-tower faced seaward, standing on the verge of the headland, its arched galleries looking out across the sparkling run of the Windward Passage. Sixty miles away, due west, beyond that highway of Spanish commerce between the Atlantic and the Caribbean Sea, rose Cape Maysi, easternmost point of Cuba. North lay Great Inagua Isle, distant seventeen sea-leagues.

The tower was aerie rather than stronghold though there were guns mounted in the embrasures of its flat, parapeted roof. On three sides the jungle brushed its stone sides, the cliff pitched sheer from its base, two hundred feet down to the beach, reached by a narrow, zigzag trail. The façade consisted of two series of high arches giving both light and shade, with the cool wind of the sea, to a terrace on the ground floor, a balcony on the upper.

Hammocks were slung on both these galleries. There were cushions on the flags, lounging chairs, tables. Carib slaves, naked save for their loin-cloths, passed to and fro, bearing wine and wine cups, serving the motley crowd of sunburned buccaneers who took their ease or occasionally swept the glittering expanse of channel with a sea-glass.

This was their club as well as lookout where they perched between raids like sea-hawks. The tower had been erected with the due sanction of the duly appointed governor of Tortuga, serving under warrant from St. Kitts and, therefore, from His Majesty the King of France. By virtue of his office he gave commissions to buccaneer leaders to *proceed against the Spanish*, a phrase of convenient elasticity. Also he collected a full tithe of all booty.

Tortuga, long since captured from Spain by the hardy cattle hunters, who had turned pirates as the *boucan* industry failed, was a Gibraltar of the Spanish Main. It was strongly fortified, almost impregnable. While it lacked true harbors, there were roadsteads for the rovers' ships under protection of the guns of the fort.

To it had swarmed keepers of taverns, of gaming-houses and of brothels. A trading company had come out from France to supply the Brethren of the Coast with all the goods their whims demanded—the best of everything at the best of prices and profits. It was easy come and easy go. Spanish gold scattered magnificently. A doubloon currency for a kiss.

The lounging rovers were garishly attired. Broad-rimmed hats, with a curling feather caught under the side turned up with a jeweled buckle, had been tossed aside with the wide-topped boots, of soft Spanish leather, on account of the heat. Their long, greasy locks were skull-bound with silk cloths of flaunting pattern and color. Their bare and hairy legs, tanned to the hue of mangrove bark, thrust themselves incongruously from short drawers of soiled white or striped material. There were shirts of fine linen, ruffled and laced, coats of brilliant supercloth, of velvet and of satin, set off with gold and silver trimmings. There were gaudy sashes beneath the leather

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belts with their great silver buckles, gold hoops in the ears revealed by the back-bound hair. Most were bearded, all were fierce and reckless eyed, all marked by debauchery of sorts, all more or less sodden with liquor.

And the gold and silver trimmings were tarnished, the fine clothes spotted with salt water or grease or liquor. The hands that boasted flashing rings were coarse and seldom cleansed. They looked like a lot of masqueraders in tawdry furnishings after a night's revel. This was their holiday, their interim between raids.

Show them a sail upon the Passage that promised a Spanish merchant galleon coming down the wind and, for all their misfit finery, they resolved themselves into a gang of devil-may-care fighters, recking nothing of odds, boarding amid the flame and thunder of culverin, the spit of pistols, thrust of pike and slash of cutlas, reveling in lust and fight and loot, returning to Tortuga—perhaps by way of Jamaica for the greater opportunity of sport—there to spend their spoils and swagger among the women until the next raid materialized.

Now, on all those leagues of sparkling, sun-kissed, wind-broken water, there showed no signs of canvas. The sky was cloudless, only less blue than the sea. At the foot of the cliff was the boat landing, a flagged terrace above the shingle, set off with a stone wall, ornamented at one end with a great bed of blossoming flowers and spiky aloes, at the other with a pool, enlarged from a natural hollow that was in touch with the tides.

Here swarmed scores of groupers, or cabrillas, great sea-perches as savage as the wildest of the buccaneers, swimming ceaselessly about their prison, some chocolate, some slate-colored, all with vermilion throats and lips, with enormous jaws furnished with bristling teeth.

These were the pets of the Brethren of the Coast who felt, perhaps, some affinity with these finny marauders to whom they fed live fish netted for that purpose twice a day. The feeding was a spectacle always well attended, as men throng to see the carnivorous beasts fed at zoo or circus.

Four rowboats were drawn up on the shingle above the reach of the incoming tide that broke languidly on the weedy rocks and the curving beach. A sloop rode at anchor. Gulls perched with folded wings on the outer crags of the promontory. Save for the occasional coarse jest and husky laugh, the clink of goblet or bottle, the place held an air of peace and sleepiness. Only the groupers swam ever round and round their jail, swerving sullenly out of each other's way, waiting for their next meal.

Atop the tower, a man leaned on the battlements, drowsing beside the staff on which the black flag was hoisted when a chase was started or a prize brought home. The soft, warm wind was heavy with spice of bush and tang of sea.

A BIG man who moved with a certain grace and catlike light-footedness, set down his seaglass and called for wine. A Carib served him hastily, offering a battered silver cup that brimmed over. The buccaneer swore at him for a clumsy dog and kicked him as he turned to go, sending the Indian sprawling amid a burst of laughter. The slave picked himself up with somber hate glowing in his eyes, outwardly submissive.

"The devil himself must have sunk every Spanish bottom," said the rover. "Ten days and not the sight of one! Mayhap they have given up the Passage and are sailing round the west end of Cuba and so south and out through the Mona Channel. My pockets are as empty as an old shell!"

He drained his cup and flung it on the stone pavement glaring angrily out to the deserted sea through the arches of the balcony. He was a Breton of France, blue-eyed, with blond hair and beard that the sun had blanched, while it had scorched the skin, until the two were in strange contrast. He spoke in French, the common language of the rovers, despite the fact that fully half of them were of British blood—English, Irish, Scotch and Welsh, with a Dutchman or so among them.

"Mayhap fear of The Exterminator keeps them in port!"

The Breton laughed offensively, spat over the low wall.

"Montbars? The Magnificent! The Exterminator! I have heard too much of this Montbars. They call him the Terror of the Main. I am waiting to see what this Exterminator looks like. By all your words, he must be an ogre."

"You are like to see him before the day

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is out," answered the other. "St. Croix promised to bring him here after they are through with the governor. Montbars and his uncle are having an audience to gain a commission."

"There are enough of us already on Tortuga."

"They say he has already taken four merchant galleons and two ships-of-war on the way from France. His life is sworn to the killing of Spaniards. He has made the last warship he took his own vessel. He drives a silver stud into the butt of the mizzen where it comes through the cabin, one for every dead Spaniard. He makes a pattern of them. They say there are two hundred and three of the studs already driven."

"They say! A pest on what they say! I like to kill a Spaniard myself, but I like better to help myself to what he has of gold or trinkets. And this Montbars—with his uncle—if you believe what 'they say'—cares nothing for loot, only for lives. If that is true, he is a fool."

"St. Croix, who met him in Jamaica, says he believes him mad. Look you, the Spanish have done him no especial wrong, save in being Spaniards. Yet he was dismissed from his school for attacking a comrade in a play who but took the rôle of one. Was like to have killed him. He believes himself born to sweep them from the seas."

"The first ship they took had a hundred men to their twenty-six, besides the sailors—a hundred fighting men. They took it by the rail in five hours' work. Ten times they boarded and were thrust back. The galleon's decks were awash with blood. They got seventy thousand crowns in gold bullion out of her and much silk, beside rich jewels. There was also a cargo of spices and *cacao*. They piled the loot by the mainmast.

"'Look at that booty,' says the uncle. 'A rich haul for a first venture.'

"'What does that matter?' asks young Montbars. 'Look at the Spaniards. Count them. Eighty-seven of them *and all dead*. That is my loot.' He wanted to slaughter the rest of 'em with his own hand."

"L'Ollonois did as much. You gossip like an old woman. Young Montbars, you say. How old is this Sir the Magnificent?"

"But twenty-three, so says St. Croix. But——"

"A suckling. Wet behind the ears and milky-lipped! Bah!"

"But St. Croix says——"

A burst of quarreling came up from the lower gallery. The crowd on the balcony hurried down. The lie had been given over dice play. A ring was forming about two men who were swiftly stripping themselves to the waist. Both were drunk; the coming fight was evidently regarded as diversion rather than tragedy. The rovers ranged themselves to view it, calling for liquor, settling themselves as at a play.

The duellists, armed with long knives, leaped at each other, locking wrists, staggering, striving each to strip the other. They went down, rolling over like cats, cursing, biting. A knife flashed free—up—down—as one came atop. The other wriggled, heaved. The knife descended to break its point upon the flags, shattered to a remnant of blade with which the owner hacked desperately, slashing the under man's cheeks and throat.

The onlookers yelled at the sight of the red blood and rose to their feet, cheering, crowding for a better view as the pair writhed and twisted. The end came suddenly. The wounded man sank his teeth in his opponent's wrist, tearing away flesh, severing a vein. The broken knife tinkled down and a fierce struggle started. It finished with an inarticulate cry of fear and agony. The top man collapsed upon the other and a gush of blood came splattering from between them. The victor crawled free, face and neck dripping, his upper body blotched with his own gore, his drawers drenched with scarlet. He had left his knife buried in the other's entrails.

"I gutted him," he gasped. "Look you, he started this. He had cogged dice. I caught him at it. Give me wine, curse you!"

He stood, wiping the blinding stuff from his face while a Carib served him. A silence fell for a moment as they looked at the dead man lying in that hideous puddle that gave out the salty savor of humanity. Already the busy flies were buzzing round the corpse, lighting on the edge of the pool, sipping at it.

A voice broke in, strangely metallic. Three men had arrived, unnoticed. Two bearded, clad like the rest, one a youth, smooth of a face whose native olive the sun had left untouched. His eyes had the

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peculiar quality of an Oriental, dark, inscrutable, piercing. Slender, of medium height, he was dressed in black even to his boots, black unrelieved, save for a narrow rim of white at neck and cuffs.

"Are there so many Frenchmen that we should kill each other?" he asked.

The winner of the fight turned toward him aggressively and turned away again uncertainly. The big Breton pushed forward.

"Who is this young cock?" he asked. "Ah, St. Croix! Then you must be Montbars the Magnificent! The Exterminator! And this is your guardian uncle! You are a pretty youngster but you should not come out without your nurse. Where is she? Bring a cup of milk to stop the child's silly prattle."

THE Breton's last draft had dissolved all restraint. The derision in his voice was like flung acid. The youngster remained proof. His face showed no color; his eyes did not change, not a muscle quivered.

"I think you have drunk something stronger than milk yourself," he answered in his even tone that suggested the ring of steel. "I have no quarrel with a Frenchman."

"It speaks like a man! It has teeth! But does not want to quarrel. It would rather play with a hammer and silver studs."

St. Croix pushed between, friendly, authoritative.

"What ails you, Brisset? Here come Montbars and his uncle, straight from the governor with their commission to be one of us on Tortuga. And he has said nothing that is not wise. To kill Spaniards is good, to kill each other an idle thing. Monpavon there was a valuable man. He's gone. Brown there is apt to bleed to death unless his wounds are tended. His jugular's sliced." Brisset would not be mollified. All his will was set to quarrel.

"Brown—there you are! And the young fool thought both were French. Preaching, when he should be playing with a rattle. He needs a spanking."

"Don't be a fool, Brisset. You are in your cups. Lad he may be, yet I swear he was old when he was born. He has not been called the Exterminator in jest. The governor had letters from France concerning him. He stands in high favor there—and here. Take my advice——"

St. Croix half led, half tugged Brisset to one side. Montbars conversed with his uncle. A leech among the rovers was trying to stanch the Englishman's wounds, slaves were taking up the body of Monpavon.

Brisset broke away impatiently, strode to Montbars and deliberately set his hardest grip in the latter's arm, squeezing the biceps. He could straighten a horseshoe or bend an iron bar into a hoop, he could tear a pack of stiff cards into quarters with his hands. Brisset the Strong was his title. He lacked the leader's qualities and ever resented the fact that the votes never came his way to establish him in the cabin with a double share. It was this glowering endurance of slight that made him belittle the reputation of Montbars. At sight of such a stripling his temper, never stable, mulled with heady wine, boiled over.

Under the gripe Montbars never winced nor did he attempt to extricate himself from the implacable clutch. A few drops of sweat broke out on his high, smooth forehead and trickled down from under his plumed hat. Flame came into his dark eyes and stayed there, burning with so fierce a hate, so set a resolve, that Brisset, even as Brown had turned aside, felt something of belittlement and released him with a short laugh.

"You are not altogether a coward, it seems," he said.

"I can not say the same for you," answered Montbars. His left arm, the one Brisset had gripped, hung nerveless. "Give me a drink of wine," he asked, and his tone had not varied in pitch or steadiness. While St. Croix motioned to a Carib, Montbars removed his hat and set it down, wiping the beady perspiration from his brow. Then he took the cup.

"Your name is French yet I think there must be much bastardy in your family," he said and deliberately flung the wine in Brisset's face. The Breton roared as the liquor stung his eyes. His rush was stopped by his comrades who flung themselves upon him. Montbars had sprung back and, his arm still visibly numb, divested himself of his coat of black satin, taking his silver-mounted rapier from its sling and sheath, standing on guard.

"It is men like you who smut the lilies

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of France," he said, "and a bully is ever the better for taming."

His uncle made no effort to restrain him nor to smooth over the matter. Brisset, foaming at the mouth, shook his head, mopping it dry.

"My sword!" he cried. "I left it on the upper gallery. Get me my sword. I'll make a capon of this cockerel. I'll trim his comb. I'll spit him to make a roast in ——. See he does not run, this Sir Exterminator!" He stamped off, up the stone stairs to the balcony. Montbars stood ground coolly, massaging his left arm, his sword looped to his right wrist.

"This is a bad place for a meeting," he said. "The arches break the light. There is a fine spot on the landing. Gentlemen, I regret this manner of joining with you but—it can not be helped." He shrugged his slight shoulders. "Uncle, you will attend me. St. Croix——"

St. Croix was the center of a group that held varying opinions. It would not do for them to cross the governor in an affair like this. It was sheer murder. Brisset was drunk.

"He will listen to you, St. Croix. He has served under you. Talk with him."

Montbars had gone down the path to the landing, followed by his uncle and some of the rovers. Brisset came leaping back. He had torn off shirt and sash, his yellow hair showed on his chest like chopped straw. His shoulders were like quarters of beef, corded with muscle. His face was crimson, his blue eyes glaring.

"The only advice I can give Brisset," said St. Croix distinctly, "is to make his will. He picked the fight. Montbars showed the proper spirit. He can take care of himself, that young gentleman. I have seen him use his sword."

THE landing terrace faced northwest. It was midafternoon and the sun, slanting down the sky, furnished a light that was impartial. The smooth slabs or coral rock, fifteen feet wide from cliff to shingle, with forty feet of clearing between flower-bed and pool, furnished ample room and excellent footing.

Montbars had taken off linen shift and silken vest and drawn off his boots, standing in his stockinged feet. The skin of his body, above the wrists and below the neck, that now showed a tinge of sun, was white as marble for all its faint hue of olive, compared with Brisset's tanned torso. Montbar's chest was hairless, his arms slim, though they were well shaped enough and there was a play of hidden muscles that tokened exercise and latent strength and suppleness. But he seemed dancing-master to Brisset's gladiator. There was an angry, purpling bruise where Brisset had squeezed his left biceps. He stood talking to his uncle in a low voice, the point of his sword tracing the joints between the slabs, as much at ease as if he were in a fencing gallery about to face some untrained adversary.

His uncle, trim of brown beard, dressed in rich, claret-colored coat and breeches, inclined to be corpulent, was grave without appearing anxious. It seemed plain that he had attended at such affairs before and had small fear of the result.

The utter confidence of the pair was not without its effect. It destroyed the effect of incongruity between the opponents, it restored the quality of the fame that had heralded the arrival of Montbars. The tales of his exploits that had seemed so incompatible with his appearance, took on color. There was something uncanny about this youth with the speech and manner of a tested leader. The Brethren knew a captain by instinct and Montbars had the air, the poise, for all his recent puberty.

St. Croix spun a coin. Brisset's second, another Breton, called and failed the turn. There was no difference of position, the lack of luck was merely an omen. They gave the swordsmen the center of the terrace, forming at either end. The groupers milled about the pool sensing the company, thrusting their crimson snouts above the water, hoping to be fed. They averaged twenty pounds in weight and some of them were nearer forty. As they swam in circles the water of the deep pool boiled.

Brisset came with a rush, his blade grinding against that of Montbars, stamping with his great bare feet, grunting as he thrust or sought to force aside the other's weapon. The rovers ceased to think of Montbars as a lad, they saw only his wonderful balance, his perfect footwork as he stepped in and out, giving way before a furious onslaught but never retreating, his rapier seeming a part of him, a steel outgrowth, a tentacle that twined about the sword of Brisset, hissing as edge countered edge.

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It was like a gust of storm striving to beat down a bamboo sapling that swayed and gave and ever sprang back again, elastic, forceful, persistent. In all the furious *mêlée* of lunges never once was Brisset inside the other's guard. He might as well have tried to plunge a bludgeon through the meshes of a revolving steel cage.

Wherever he thrust there was one steel rod that was as a hundred, truly angled, from which his grinding weapon glanced past side and flank, over shoulder and beyond neck. When, with sheer weight and brute strength, he pushed it to one side, Montbars shifted footing and the blood-seeking blade slid on harmless. Before Brisset could recover Montbars' point threatened him and he escaped by a mighty leap aside or backward, not altogether scatheless.

His great chest was nicked in half a dozen places, little runnels of blood clogged in the hair, his left shoulder was cut. His eyes grew wilder as he was baffled. His chest and belly began to heave and his grunts changed to pants of distress. He could have broken the other as a man breaks a brittle branch, but his strength was mocked. Sweat poured down him yet Montbars showed no signs of loss of wind or the strange quality of strength that sinewed him.

He was practically on the defensive but he was fencing with a purpose.

The rovers watched in silence, tense, open-mouthed. If it was the desire of Montbars to give them an exhibition, to impress them at once with his courage and skill, to set himself on a pinnacle as a superb swordsman, he was accomplishing his aim. They viewed him with an increasing respect and wonder that mounted to awe. He was untouched. His skin had reacted with a slight moisture, but he was as fresh as when he first appeared among them. And the proud, resolute carriage of his head, the flame in his eyes, forced acknowledgment of his quality.

A yell of surprize, of delight, broke from them as a patch of red, the size of a man's palm, suddenly appeared on the chest of Brisset, jumping back, the spring out of his legs. A patch of bloody skin, furred with yellow hair, dropped to the ground and Montbars flicked it aside with his foot. He had carved it away with his point, a crimson token of impending death, a trophy as ghastly as the scalp-lock plucked by an Indian warrior.

Brisset, laboring like a cart-horse in a slough, flashed a tortured glance at his shouting comrades, turned it on his bleeding chest and summoned his failing strength. Montbars was on him with threatening point, forcing him back so that the men by the pool scattered to give them room. Brisset gave ground, then swung up his sword and brought it down in a prodigious stroke. Agile as a panther, Montbars sprang in beneath the despairing blow.

His sword showed like a flash of light before it buried itself in the Breton's chest, gliding through between the ribs, driving through muscle and flesh as a knife cuts cheese, straight through the heart, coming out below the shoulder blade, the hilt thudding home at the end of his lunging arm.

Brisset, with awful, contorted face, stumbled backward, striking the border rockery of the pool. Montbars stood set to the shock, retaining the sword as it came free, blood-stained from point to guard, almost wrenched from his grasp.

Brisset fell with a mighty splash, backward into the pool, his hands clutching at air. The water was tossed high, wetting the crowd that surged toward the pool where the Breton was sinking in a mad turmoil of ravenous fish, flinging themselves upon his nearly naked body, tearing and gulping, tossing and pulling the lifeless form until it appeared once more animate with wide-flung limbs that were raveled to the bones in an instant.

None was hardy enough to attempt rescue of the dead man. The surface was ribboned with oily, crimson streaks covering the wild disturbance. An arm appeared, ghastly, horrible. It was drawn violently below the bloody water again as the groupers tugged and tore in savage lust at their bountiful meal. Montbars had turned away to put on his clothes, impassive, cold with an apathy that made the rovers stand aside, glancing at him askance, as if he was possessed of a devil.

St. Croix, leader of pirates, conqueror in many a bloody foray, shuddered.

"It gives me a qualm," he said. "That is a dog's death. We'll recover nothing but the bones. No need to feed the *cabrillas* tonight. That is enough to make a man's

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flesh creep. I, for one, shall get drunk tonight."

MONTBARS the Exterminator might well have been called Montbars the Monomaniac. His perverted mental action was limited more and more to the specific impulse of ridding the world of Spaniards. How it had taken that trend, none might tell. The incident of his attacking his schoolmate was true enough. Long before that some kink of cerebral impulse had led him into the collection of every available scrap of information concerning the animus of Spain against his own country, of the terrors of the Inquisition, the accounts of those who had escaped such tortures. As he had grown the impulse had strengthened with manhood and the means to indulge in his propensity.

A cadet of a noble house of France, Montbars had inherited considerable money of which his uncle was guardian during his minority. The uncle may have been tinged by the same animosity toward Spain, though there lay no reasons in their own circle of family or friends for revenge. The uncle was of a stolid exterior, with a mind open to the making of money and, tucked away somewhere in his phlegm, an itch for adventure.

The idiosyncrasy of his nephew was insufficient to have him pronounced incompetent to manage his own affairs, his natural cleverness quite capable of thwarting such a move—had his uncle ever conceived it. The uncle was of martial stock, the prospects of booty to be gained on the Spanish main were alluring.

If his nephew wished to fit out a ship for such purposes, to bear the expenses and willing to accept the increasing mortality of their foes as his share of gain, while his uncle made more material use of their opportunities—why, that was a plan that promised to be profitable in more ways than one.

Across ocean they had come, well manned, well metaled, seeking fortune on the high seas—and finding it. The two hundred and three silver nails hammered into the butt of the mizzen were no fiction. They had been imbedded by Montbar's own hand and he feasted his eyes upon them a hundred times a day. He had set a mark of one thousand as the present limit of his ambitions, but there were few who doubted that his obsession would not be satisfied by any set amount.

His even, metallic speech, the dark eyes that knew no softness, that changed only as the red fire of the desire to kill showed back of them, his black garb, his demeanor, strangely settled for one of his years, his wonderful skill of sword-play, ability with the pistol and apparent immunity from all harm, marked him to his crew as one not entirely human.

After a fight his cold rage continued when the blood anger of the rest had subsided. To see his foes surrender was the thing he hated most. To count the actual dead, to make that toll as great as possible before victory bade him show some signs of favor was his greatest—his only delight.

He would maroon his prisoners upon a sandy cay with salt meat and water enough merely to tantalize them, or set them adrift in small boats they packed like herrings in a cask, calling such actions too merciful. To see them walk the plank, to send a bullet through the brain as the victim stood, blindfolded and arm-bound, with toes feeling the edge of the fatal board—that suited Montbars.

His uncle restrained his ferociousness with difficulty.

"You go too far, Louis," he declared. "The men begin to be dissatisfied. They say—and with reason—that you continue the fight long after quarter would be taken if offered and, thereby, you needlessly expose them. They are fighters—none better—yet, while there is some measure of glory in their endeavor, there is greater hope of gold and the means of spending it. To be risked unnecessarily—that is another thing. They are not like you, Louis, convinced of a mission."

Montbars turned his glance on his uncle and the older man inwardly winced. At times the eyes of Louis Montbars resembled small mirrors of black glass that revealed nothing but the outside world. At times they were like black glass again through which one looked into a void, like a man staring into midnight from the casement of a darkened house. Where a soul should have shown, there was vacancy. Before his nephew the uncle felt sometimes infinitely childish. There were moments when he was inclined to coincide with the expression of the forecastle—that Montbars was possessed—and not of an angel.

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"They talk mutiny? They, who have been elected to become the lashes of the scourge that my hand is destined to hold. Jeanne d'Arc had her visions in the orchard at Domremy, uncle mine, and I have had my visitations. This morning, as I walked the poop before the stars paled, I saw Saint Michael with his shining sword.

"He drew it from the scabbard of Orion and the pale flame of it lightened all the sky. 'Strike, my son,' he commanded me. 'Strike and fear not that you shall reach your goal!' His voice was like the muttering of low thunder. Before it died away I renewed my vows and a great peace enveloped me. A thousand silver stars shall yet shine in that mast as a visible record of my endeavor and success. For this was I born, for this was I ordained, to purge these seas of the scum of Spain, the spawn of Satan."

His uncle nodded.

"That is well, Louis, but the men have seen no visions and they were engaged upon contract to fight when called upon and share the spoil of victory. We have lost heavily—one man in every five is gone over side with shot about his legs to start him to the ooze. They but feel 'tis hard to fight and win and still to keep on fighting men, who, cornered like rats, fight all the harder. With them, Louis, fighting Spaniards is a trade. With you 'tis a religion."

"I am the avenger of ten thousand tortured Frenchmen, broken on the rack, burned at the stake. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. With every nail starred in that wood, with every Spanish soul sent to its eternal abiding place in hell, I know that my end is being accomplished.

"I go upon inspection," he ended abruptly. "Do you come with me?"

His uncle followed, hoping yet doubting whether heed would be taken of his carefully advised words. Aboard a buccaneering ship the crew had much to say, they could not be indicted for mutiny if they voted against any set action, they were shareholders in the enterprise. Not so much so as if Montbars had not provided the original outfit with his own means but still partners, with right of the ballot. There had been many murmurs to the effect that they were not butchers to cut down or shoot men who are willing to surrender, that slaughter in the heat of battle was one thing, in chilling blood quite another.

THE main thing that might still bind them together was the already established fact that the Spaniards regarded them as foes who were not of ordinary caliber. Go on at this rate and some stupendous effort would undoubtedly be made to take them. There were rumors already that orders had been issued by the Spanish admiralty to flay alive every man captured from Montbars' crew. Such an order would be carried into literal effect as long as the victim survived the skinning process. How to curb Montbars or how to satisfy him before the catastrophe, the inevitable encounter of overpowering odds, should overtake them, was the problem of the uncle. That and the brighter reverse of the picture—the return to France with fame and wealth. Montbars could not be driven, barely guided, never deliberately checked. His uncle shrugged his shoulders with true Gallic philosophy as he descended the elaborate poop ladder to the gun deck.

The prize that Montbars had appropriated in place of the vessel he had brought out from France, was a magnificent vessel. She was over-high of poop and forecastle; she offered too much freeboard to the wind, making overmuch leeway with wind abeam. But her entry was unusually fine and her water streamlines sweet. Montbars had replaced the lateen rig of fore and main with square yards and the change helped her to hug the wind and drive hard before it. His uncle was the seaman in all this—Montbars the fighting commander. The ballast had been shifted and a true center of effort discovered thereby. It was safe to aver that there was no Spanish ship in the western sea could cope with her.

Her name had been changed from *La Ventura* to *The Scourge*, a grim title for a ship so ornamented, so scrolled and gay with paint and gold leaf, with carvings of cupids and seamaidens, emblazoned with escutcheon and with her sails decked with fancy designs in rich needlework. The floors of her cabins were richly parqueted, the sides handsomely paneled. There were paintings, hangings, rugs, silver and gold plate, silver candelabra and sconces, an elaborate, strange background for the moody figure in black that dominated her.

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She was crammed with armament and the crew drilled daily in keeping the equipment ready for instant and effective service. From the orlop deck, where the cables were coiled, to the mount of the poop, all was in order. *The Scourge* was an engine of warfare.

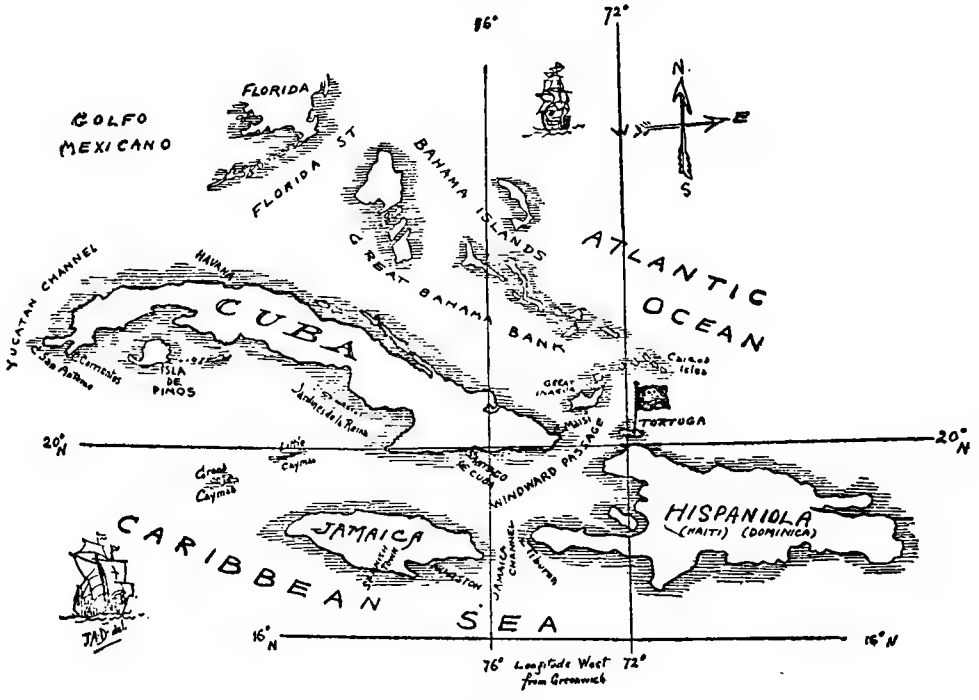
She carried six, twelve and eighteen pounders—forty in all. There were bags of iron grape-shot—twelve to the bag—bags of smaller pelleted partridge, canister, langrel and chain, with dismantling shot to go whirling through the enemy's rigging. There were muskets and musketoons, pistols, pikes, boarding-axes and cutlasses, bayonets and knives. There were hand grenades and Greek fire.

The shot was kept unrusted, the gun tackle overhauled and greased, the guns themselves painted gray with a gold stripe about their necks. From lollyboys to gunners, every one was competent, tested, duly subordinate though they held awe rather than pride in their commander.

Montbars' inspection was rigid but well designed. As his uncle was seaman, so was he soldier. But he spoke no word of cheer or commendation and he glowered at the sound of chanties or of a laugh.

They knew the mark he had set—a thousand silver nails. Beyond that they had regulated themselves not to go. Fetch it and they would make their way back to France or spend their booty in the Indies where the easy-going life had captivated many of them. But, willy-nilly, Montbars must find a new crew if he wanted to go further. So they worked with a will that was dogged rather than enthusiastic.

Lookouts were in the tops day and night, searching for a Spaniard. Montbars coasted the north of Cuba after gaining his commission from Tortuga's governor, rounded its western shores and made his main cruising-ground along its southern coast. In six weeks he overhauled four ships and the toll of silver nails mounted to four hundred and twenty-seven with two hundred Spaniards marooned on the cays of the Ganarreos Archipelago and the Golfo de Cazones.



The loot piled up, unapportioned. The men sent their representative aft to ask for a division, for a run ashore at Jamaica. He returned forward sulking.

"We go to the Grand Cayman for careening and water and to get turtles," he announced. "That is the answer. He looked

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at me with the sourness of a balked devil though he thinks he is by way of being a saint. 'We go no more ashore,' says he, 'until this box is empty.' He has the little chest of silver nails with him and his fingers played with them all the time I was in the cabin. 'If any man is ill satisfied,' says he, 'let him come aft and tell me so. I am the master of this ship and, sooner than halt in my mission, I will sink her and every man aboard of her.' Egad, he meant it. What's more, he'd do it."

"How? Have we no word in this?"

"How? I know not. But I'll swear he would compass it. He never yet spoke idly."

"We serve under a madman."

"Have you the stuff to tell him so? This is sure, we shall be rich men if his luck holds, and there is no Spaniard afloat can sail from us or stand against us."

THUS the matter ended. To the Grand Cayman they went. Montbars made concession by division of the loot and each man chinked his gold, fondled his fineries or held his jewels to the light and saw in them visions of unlimited revel. Off Cayo Largo they fought and sunk a great galleon after they had set her afire, without boarding her. From a survivor picked up, Montbars got the rating of her crew and added one hundred and seventy nails to his tally. The one hundred and seventieth was the informant, pistoled by Montbars in his cabin because the man hinted that reprisal was in order and then closed his lips against definite information.

Off Cabo Frances, on the Isla de Pinos, they caught two merchantmen under convoy, cutting them off, chasing them down the wind while the ship of war labored after them, turning at last to fight her to strike her flag. The merchantmen they looted, the warship Montbars raked with his guns and went like a raging devil among his men when they ceased firing as the Spanish colors went down the halyards.

The mizzenmast was belted high with silver studs and the obsessed Montbars was, beyond the shadow of a doubt, a madman, nothing less, a homicide who saw nightly visions and heard voices in the wind approving his course.

He slept by snatches, his burning eyes were deep pitted, he ate little and drank no wine and, save when a sail was sighted, he was silent. When the chase was known to be Spanish a volcano of energy and hate spewed out the lava of his will. His flag—a white *fleur-de-lys* upon a black ground, designed by himself, emblem at once of his country and his own purpose—flew boldly at his masthead. He walked the poop almost incessantly, with ready spy-glass, ranging the horizon, running down every slant of wind in the hope of finding quarry at the end of the lane.

Every flash of lightning was to him the unsheathing of Michael's sword; every thunder-peal the voice of the archangel.

Off the Little Gardens, Los Jardinillos, they ran unexpectedly into a merchant vessel that had the weather-gage of them and was well handled. Recognizing the freebooters' flag, the Spaniards fought without hope of quarter, since death was to be preferred to abandonment upon a sand spit, fought so desperately that Montbars was forced to haul off for repairs, his shrouds severed, his mainmast weakened and toppling, his fore gone at the top. Night came up and the Don escaped, the first of all the ships ever engaged by Montbars to get away.

His own cockpit was full of wounded and many of these the overworked surgeon was reducing by an arm or leg, the stump dipped in hot pitch to take its chance of gangrene. Over all *The Scourge* were groans and oaths and the wild yells of fever and delirium. These and their echoes. The decks were stained with blood, encumbered with the raffle of the fight. Montbars, alone in his cabin, gnawed his lips until they bled.

His tally was above seven hundred now. There were more nails should be added by this fight, but how many he could not tell. The question of driving too few or too many tormented his kinked brain. Not for anything would he have overestimated nor could he bear to be balked of a true accounting. He played with the points, undecided, morose. His uncle superintended the repairs, driving the workable crew by the light of lanthorns and the moon to replace *The Scourge* in proper trim. It would not do for them to be caught handicapped.

The escaped vessel would bear proud news of their setback, a fleet might be sent out after them and, finding them crippled, make easy capture. Then the flaying would begin. Not a man aboard doubted

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that, from Montbars down. They had been losing men in every engagement until now they were able to work less than two-thirds their battery. They had too few men left for boarding with the sick-bay full as it was and men dying every hour. The best weapon left them was their speed.

At dawn a jury topmast had been rigged, the mainmast braced and hooped, the rigging repaired and some of the canvas patched. *The Scourge* was fit for sea, barring a hurricane.

Montbars' uncle, worn with the night, found his nephew still in the cabin, surveying the mizzen with its rows of gleaming studs.

"Look you," he said. "I have added fifty. Without doubt there were that many killed. It is a low average. What think you? Seven hundred and sixty-six!" His eyes flared like black opals in sunlight.

"We must put in to Jamaica to refit and to recruit, Louis."

Montbars gave a start and frowned but his uncle went on firmly.

"The men are at their limit, Louis. There is not a man aboard us who has not suffered some wound, if not in this action, in others. They are not all healed. Not a score could be considered sound. They are weary of fighting, they have earned rest and holiday. The mainmast has been fished, but it may go with any strain. We need new canvas——"

"This from you? It shall not be. I will not turn back. I will destroy us all first. I——"

"Don't be a fool, Louis. You can't fight without men to serve the guns. We couldn't resist boarders. All we can do is run—not fight—and we had better run to Jamaica. Give the men shore leave awhile and they'll come back the better for it, with new ones to fill the complement. But you'll never drive the rest of those studs, my lad, unless you follow my advice."

He spoke more authoritatively than he had since the commencement of their enterprise, but the night had strained him, the affair was in crisis and his nephew was, he believed, distraught, and needed to be brought up with a round turn. Threats of destroying all hands, however vague and impractical, was carrying matters with entirely too high a hand. The uncle neither believed himself specified by the saints to kill Spaniards nor did he relish the prospect of martyrdom in such a cause, aside from risks of battle.

Montbars fingered his studs. It was plain that the suggestion he might be prevented from completing the pattern of one thousand appealed to him more strongly than any other argument.

"We are in seaway?" he asked. His uncle nodded as the door of the cabin opened and the crew's quartermaster entered, followed hesitatingly by the chief gunner, the boatswain and the sailmaker. Montbars' olive skin, that rarely changed color under any circumstance, grew livid and red gleams showed in his eyes.

"How now?" he asked haughtily. "What means this intrusion?"

THE boatswain and the sailmaker stepped back. The quartermaster, who held the right of entry as the men's agent, touched his forelock respectfully, glanced at Montbars' uncle as if to assure himself that the way had been prepared, then motioned to his two mates to come even with him, the three ranging along one edge of the table where their leader played with the silver points, setting them into companies and patterns, moving all with the sense of touch, swiftly as a blind man can weave, his eyes all the time upon his underlings.

"On all this ship," said the quartermaster, "there is no man, save yourself, who has not been wounded or who does not nurse a present hurt."

"Is that my fault, sirrah? Do you charge me with shirking?"

"I make no charge," said the man stolidly. The boatswain stealthily crossed himself. "I but state the truth. Some can not fight, all are stiff and weary of fighting. One hundred of us started from France in this ship's company. Now there are forty-seven left and others like to die within the day. We are tired of fighting. There are not enough of us left to fight. Of the forty-seven, eleven are below in sick-bay. Three will surely die, says the surgeon. Benton hath lost a leg, with Renfrew. Bellamy's right arm is off at the elbow. Forty and one men left, all told, with half of them in aught but good fettle, cannot handle this ship, gun and sail, in the condition we find ourselves. We speak for all the men, even in sick-bay, those that can make their wish manifest."

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"We want shore leave, time to refit ourselves, to relimber, to spend the money we have earned with our blood. We have hired for money, fought for money, not so that we may look at it, but that we may have the matters money will bring."

He stopped, sweat running down his forehead from his concentrated effort at speech and from the earnestness that underlay it. Tied to that was an evident belief that he risked his life in facing Montbars.

"To drink and fill your bellies, like swine. To gamble, to chase loose women. Drunkness and lechery, the lusts of the flesh and the devil!" Montbars' tone was hollow as if some one spoke within himself. He had the silver studs in a great circle now.

"Belike," rejoined the quartermaster sturdily. "To go ashore and spend our moneys as we will while we relax and while the ship is overhauled. When that is done and the complement filled up we will to sea again right cheerily."

Montbars swept the circle into confusion, broomed the studs off the table top into his palm, deposited them in his casket and shut the lid.

"We will go to Jamaica," he said. "God send that I may find a hundred men, not fifty, so that I may replace all those who are tired of fighting." The scorn in his voice was biting as he nodded them a curt dismissal. His uncle breathed relievedly. He had feared Montbars was beyond reasoning. And the fished mainmast was in none too good shape.

They hauled due south and cleared the Three Caymans, the islands that suggest great crocodiles aswim in the salt sea, passing between Grand Cayman and Little Cayman and Cayman Brac. Montbars perpetually walked the poop. Lean, swart, with his burning eyes, his tight lips twisted a little, he seemed ever to commune with his inner spirit and to glean scant comfort from the converse. He had no orders to issue concerning seamanship and he talked with no one, not even his uncle. He ate sparingly, and alone. Back and forth along the break of the poop he went, watch in, watch out as if he knew no weariness, his sardonic glance sweeping ship and crew with no more recognition of the men than if they had been shadows. For all the self-assured righteousness of his cause he might have been a lieutenant of Satan, thwarted, biding his time, chafing and burning inwardly with the red flame that shone always through the dark glass of his eyes. The sailors glanced askance at him, but they were headed for Jamaica where there was life and ease, wine and kissing; and they hauled cheerily with the fished and restayed mainmast doing its duty valiantly.

MONTBARS leaned forward from the break of the poop, his whole face alight as if the flame that showed in his eyes also poured in lesser measure through transparent flesh. From the tops, fore and main, the cries of : "A sail! To larboard! Off the starboard bow. A sail!" still echoed. Then came "To larboard, twin sail!" "Starboard, twin sail!"

They were visible enough from the deck, specks of white that topped the horizon, winging their way toward *The Scourge* from two directions, on differing tacks with the wind aft the beam, making good progress, closing in toward Montbars' vessel. Two to the left and two to the right, then three on either side, a small armada. No doubt but these were ships of Spain, nor that they sought to capture *The Scourge*. The wind blew fresh and they lifted, seeming to strain at the leash like hounds. *The Scourge* made good headway but she could not drop them, with her jury-foretopmast carrying reduced sail, her mainmast unable to stand the strain of topsail, her canvas hastily and insufficiently patched.

"Too tired to fight?" called Montbars, his voice ringing like the voice of a trumpet, high, exultant. "You'll fight now, to save your skins!"

It was a grave situation. Jamaica was many, many leagues away, they were in the open sea, being hunted like a hare on a plain, shorthanded, crippled. To Montbars the only outcome that mattered was the fact that more Spaniards would be killed. His own fate and that of his men he did not seem to trouble with. He was pure fanatic as he watched the white specks grow into low pyramids of pearly canvas, then the hulls lift beneath them, coming on, verging in from right and left, gaining, gaining.

All else aboard took the matter seriously. They were caught and there was no way out of it but death. To die fighting was easiest. Only a miracle might save them. That the Spaniards would pluck and strip

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the live skin from their quivering flesh if they got the chance was certainty, unless they devised some more exquisite method.

There were no cowards aboard. The battle light glowed steadily in their eyes and they made their preparations to sell their lives as dearly as possible. The ship lunged on with her spliced masts creaking ominously and the enemy crowding up. A brave crew under a mad master.

His uncle, glancing at Montbars' buoyancy, remembering the shortage in the tally of a thousand, wondered a little at his bearing. Forty men, however valiant, could scarce hope to complete that shortage before they died or were overcome. It meant six men for every one of them and the odds were greater than that. His own face was set grimly. This was the end of their voyaging.

Up came the Spanish galleons, bright gleaming in the sun, the waves creaming under their bows. They seemed ships picked for their speed and they were well matched. Six were in sight and a seventh was a shadowy cloud far back. *The Scourge* was running her nose into an apex that would be formed by the two leading ships on either tack. They could either stand off and cannonade *The Scourge* to splinters, or board. It was a question whether they preferred some personal revenge on the bodies of the survivors or their annihilation. It was not to be a seafight but a slaughter. The Exterminator was about to be exterminated.

The wounded mainmast weakened under the steady strain. The taut shrouds and stays still held it but it bowed. To add more sail meant disaster. The men stood by the batteries, waiting. They had one advantage, they were sailors and soldiers too; every man aboard could fight. Like beasts at bay they showed bared teeth and talons in their shining weapons set handy, every pistol aboard primed, with muskets and musketoons; every blade razor-sharp of edge.

Puffs of smoke showed blowing away from the bows of the leading Spanish ship to larboard, shot came plowing through the crests, dropping just a little short. The boom of guns came down the wind. To starboard the heading galleon responded. One missile plumped just ahead of the bows of *The Scourge*. They did not fire again though Montbars' carronades barked defiance. They sailed on with their superior speed and the next pair came up. Now there was an eighth ship on the horizon. The purpose was apparent. Seeing they had the legs of *The Scourge*, knowing it crippled like a winged duck, with all the day before them, the Dons pressed on under stress of sail until all but the two laggards had passed the buccaneers and these last were at broadside. As the others had made their gain they had hauled sail, hanging back. Now they waited to see what *The Scourge* would do, come on, or turn tail. In either case they had her at their mercy, to await or overtake at will. Eight galleons, four hundred guns against forty, twenty men against every one!

Jamaica was a hundred miles away. Montbars had been caught in the open. There was no chance of aid, nothing at hand more friendly than the bead-eyed sea gulls that had followed the galleons from land and now hovered high, wheeling above the vessels, ever watchful, waiting for such fragments as might come to their share, wondering a bit, in their dull, shallow way, why these ships had gathered together in midsea.

BOOM-BOOM! *The Scourge* opened fire from both broadsides, three men working desperately to each gun to take the place of five, firing the batteries by sections. For a moment she was enveloped in her own powder-smoke, cottony folds of it blown off slowly by the wind. The galleons opened upon her, by two, by four, and, as *The Scourge* went staggering through that gantlet-run of flame and smoke and hurtling iron, maneuvered so that they all surrounded her, stabbing at withers, at side, at flank and from the rear.

It was like a wounded boar attacked by boarhounds, snarling, wicked, able to rend and tear, more than a match for each separate enemy but now, harassed, wounded, bleeding, weakening yet defiant.

For three hours the galleons held off, hulling *The Scourge*, sending the chain-shot whistling high among masts and rigging. The weakened mainmast succumbed to a hail of solid balls, the remaining canvas was rent to ribbons, the great jib-boom and sprits shot away, and still she showed her teeth and spat her venom, though less than a score of men remained

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who could stand upright. The surgeon was down, the wounded lay with the dead unattended on her decks that were grooved with shot, foul with blood. The quartermaster sprawled in his own bowels, the chief gunner had been beheaded by linkshot, Montbars' uncle was wounded by musket balls and Montbars, struck for the first time in his charmed career, by a splinter that lamed him and made him leak strength at every step, despite the tourniquet he twisted above his knee.

Beneath the waterline the hull of *The Scourge*, strongly built, racked a little by the storm of shot that raked and swept and tore through her upper decks, was untouched. The sea was comparatively calm and she rolled little. No chance shot had penetrated her bottom and the Dons had no mind to sink her. First to draw her teeth, then summon her to surrender, and wreak vengeance on those left, that was their policy as the eight of them hammered away, sailing about the helpless vessel in a grand circle, firing alternate broadsides at their target while, from their fighting tops, came a rain of lead.

At times they held their fire because of the heavy fog that rolled along the water from the exploded gas and enveloped their quarry, so that all they could see was the black flag with its white *fleur-de-lys*, all pierced and ragged but flaunting in its tatters, showing above the billows of smoke. Such whiles they cooled their guns, waiting for clearance.

The galleons were not unscathed. The shots of *The Scourge* had gone home. One had been set afire, another had lost foremast, another mizzen. Splintered sides testified to hits and the cockpits of the Spaniards held some share of wounded.

Montbars, with set teeth, stormed inwardly, like a boiler shaking with suppressed steam.

"Oh, to come foul of one of them," he said to his uncle who leaned faintly against the poop rail. "Or, if the cowards would but board us."

"They will, before long. They'll close, the curs, when they are sure we can not hurt them overmuch. We'll give them a proper welcome."

The wind had failed somewhat. *The Scourge* was enveloped in the smoke clouds once again. Gradually they rifted. Montbars and his uncle stood on the ravaged poop. Its glorious mouldings had been shot away, its windows shattered, the ladders wrecked under the bombardment. Sluggishly the wreaths of vapor lifted as if reluctant to reveal the ruin they had wrapped.

The bulwarks were stove in, the cannon had been knocked from their carriages, the trunnions unshipped. Only six of all the battery piped a feeble answer to the roar of the combined artillery of the Spaniards. The sailors, naked to the waist, were red with blood from head to foot, blood that seeped through bandages or started from unclothed wounds. They fought like men already dead, specters waging hopeless battle, condemned to this as a purgatory for their sins. So they would fight on until they dropped.

Montbars' uncle straightened up from the rail.

"Look," he cried. "They come at last!"

COMING from every galleon, with oars plying fast, with the glitter of armor from helm and corselet, heading for *The Scourge*, two boats from every ship, sixteen pinnaces fast closed the short distance. In them, aside from the oarsmen, were no less than tenscore fighters with pistol and blade, even with muskets for a first discharge, two hundred unwounded gallants against less than a score of battle-worn, wounded buccaneers. Montbars' eyes glittered as he watched them. His voice rang sharp and commanding.

"Up to the poop with me, lads, we'll meet them here, steel to steel, the curs! Up, to me, and we'll show them how Frenchmen die!" He made a gallant, rallying figure, clad in his black best, the blood-soaked bandage about his knee like an honorable garter of knighthood. They came up to him, armed with their blades, with knife and axe, with cutlas or pike, each to his favorite weapon.

Primed pistols they brought with them and they made a ring about the mizzen, a bristling circle that fronted the Spaniards as they poured over the broken rail at bows and sides and over the taffrail, shouting war cries that faltered a little as they themselves hesitated at sight of that valiant stand of foes who knew no defeat, even in death.

The pistols yapped, answering the musketry, men fell clutching at their wounds, the shouts of leaders rang out and the fight

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closed; a writhing mass that struggled back and forth in a ring now widening, now contracting, stubbornly, slowly disintegrating. Gasps, oaths, grate of steel, stamping feet that trampled on the fallen, men fighting too close for swing of weapons, at handgripes, seeking to pierce ribs with knife and poniard. One little knot of armored Dons strove for one purpose, forcing and carving their way in to where Montbars, his olive skin true white at last, drained of blood; his back to the mizzenmast, wielded his rapier with nervous energy, his uncle dead at his feet, shot through the brain.

A pass, a parry, a broken curse and one went down before him. Two others he engaged at once, slicing the arm of one, piercing the neck of the other. His men were beaten down all about him, fighting to the last on raised elbow or striking feebly as they lay prone, with furious Spaniards transfixing them with pike and sword.

A rope was flung, caught, passed about and about and Montbars was wound tight to his own mizzen, helpless but unconquered, the fanatic flame still in his eyes. A Don stepped forth, arrogant, cruel, vicious, who slapped him across the face with a bloody gauntlet that left a smear on his flesh matched by the dull glow of proud anger that rose from a heart already robbed of its reserves.

"So, Exterminator! We have you at last. We shall exterminate you, inch by inch, Montbars. A missal shall be made of the tale of your defeat and we shall bind it in your skin for parchment. The last chapter shall tell of your torturing and of your pleas for mercy. We shall send it to the king, together with your head preserved in spices. That we shall not flay, Montbars, for fear of spoiling the souvenir. We shall commence from the neck and go carefully—for the sake of the book cover."

"It will be rare reading—for Spaniards," said Montbars. "If it but tell the truth I shall want no better memorial. If not, my skin will give the lie to it, with every shrunken pore a mouth that laughs at Spain whenever the book is taken up.

"In this mast, below in my cabin, you can read the tally of my triumphs. Less than forty men you have managed to butcher today, the eight shiploads of you. And I think we have evened that score. But, below, a silver stud for every Spanish soul now blistering in hell, you can see the full register—seven-hundred-and-seventy-six, my gallant conqueror!"

He laughed at his victor, silently but with such evident relish, with such sneering insolence of triumph, that the Spaniard glowered at him with a throat that choked for words.

"Take him below," he ordered at last. "We'll settle the disposition of him at the captains' conference. Any that have life enough in them for entertainment, bind and place in their own forecastle. The rest fling overboard. Set Montbars in a safe place amidships until we are ready for him."

But, aside from Montbars, they found none that the Spanish surgeons deemed sufficiently alive to furnish sport. They had died as they desired, face to the overflooding foe, their weapons bloodied by the veins of the enemy, game to the last gasp.

WHEN Montbars was brought at last before the assembled captains and officers of the armada—some thirty of them to form the general court of judgment and execution—he was perfectly composed. By a strong effort he obliterated his limp, forced his blanched body to walk with its habitual pride.

They had selected his own cabin for the final scene. The black flag with its simple *fleur-de-lys* had been taken down and reserved as a trophy of the occasion. The notoriety of Montbars had extended so vigorously to the Old World that an edict of King Philip had backed up the desire of all Cuba and the Spanish Main to capture this bold pirate and make of him a notable example.

The flaying—if flaying was decided upon—would be done publicly in the plaza of Santiago or Havana, after the prisoner had been exhibited to all the populace and the glory of the captains. But they were not to be done out of their baiting. The prisoner knew nothing of the edict. The wound in his leg had been pronounced not dangerous. He should be well fed, if not fatted, for the grand occasion.

Most of the thirty were of the nobility, *caballeros* of high pedigree. Their pride had been humiliated by the sight of the silver studs that ringed about the mast. They knew what they stood for, every one a life sped by Montbars, among them some of the best of the *hidalgo* blood.

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The battered *Scourge* was thronged with Spanish mariners and soldiers, eager to get a glimpse of the great malefactor, to jeer at the captive. Yet they were strangely quiet as he walked from amidship unaided by his guards. His arms were securely bound, his sword had been taken from him. He was incapable of harm, but they shrank from his assured step, from the look with which he swept them, regarding them as he might so many apes in the jungle with the light of conscious superiority, of a sublime contempt, in his dark eyes; the more lustrous for the pallor of suffering, the inward canker of defeat that he sought still to turn to such victory as he might attain.

He stood between his guards at the table. Shot had torn splintering holes through the poop walls, plunging out by opposing panels. The place was in confusion. The sun, sinking low in the west, sent beams through the shot holes that limned the silver belting of the mast with a crimson film and touched a little pile of studs on the table with the same hue. They had discovered his little casket and some of them had counted the remaining studs.

"I fear," said the presiding officer, "I fear me, Montbars, that your plans have miscarried. You will never drive another nail. Your ambitions seem to have been thwarted. You French dog! What have you to say?"

"Little that would interest you, I fear—save one thing—of which later. Is it permitted that I ask a question?"

There was no answer. All in the cabin surveyed him with cruel, hostile eyes.

"Out of your chivalry, the chivalry of Spain, I would ask leave to bid farewell to my uncle, to my comrades, if any are alive." The listeners winced slightly to the exquisite sarcasm of his emphasis, so excellently done that it might not be challenged, yet went home. There was a good deal ignoble about this victory, with eight ships against one, half manned and crippled in equipment, with the sole survivor so much at his ease, so defiant of all circumstances.

"You will have to wait and greet them in ——, Montbars, where they already are."

The gleam in Montbars' even gaze heightened for an instant.

"Then I have only this to ask—not as boon but bargain. It is sure that you will kill me, when and as you will. I am content."

"With all these nails of yours undriven?" jeered one of his judges, letting them shower tinkling through his palms to the table. Montbars lowered his lids.

"That matter is as Fate has willed it. Here is my proposal. There is much booty in this ship as doubtless you have discovered. Yet you have not found a twentieth of it. Much of the wealth taken by me has been spent by my comrades ashore. My own share and that of my uncle, as owners, consisting of rare gems, diamonds, rubies, pearls and the like, is hidden in a place so contrived that, were you to take the ship apart, plank by plank, yet you should never find it. I will not anger you by its inventory nor remind you of what ships it was taken from. Suffice it to say that there are jewels of the value of two hundred thousand crowns that I meant to take back to France but which I can not take with me on the voyage whither I am shortly bound. It is pity they should be lost—as they most surely will be if I give you not the way of discovering them."

The glances went round, of wonder that changed to contentment, to avarice, to mutual understanding. It were pity indeed if such spoil should be overlooked. Two hundred thousand crowns of sparkling jewels! All such loot would be their own as their reward. A smile flittered swiftly over the set mouth of Montbars as he surveyed their faces and read them.

"It is little we can grant you. What do you ask?"

"THE manner of my death. I am willing to die at any time but I wish the death of a man, of the cadet of a noble house of France, not that of a butchered beast. To be flayed—the pain I could endure—not the disgrace."

They eyed each other, judges and fearless prisoner.

"Take him apart," ordered the chief commander. Left to themselves they debated swiftly but not long. Greed inflamed them. A promise to so great a villain was a small matter. Montbars knew nothing of their determination to take him back alive to Cuba for exhibition and public death. They might even give him his way and swear he had been killed in battle.

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But that was the minor matter—the jewels the great. They ordered him back.

"You shall have your choice of rope, of bullet, bowl or blade," said the commander. "But there shall be no long delay."

Montbars smiled at them with his lips. In his eyes the flame leaped.

"Death can not come too quickly for me," he answered. "Let my arms be freed."

"No. Give us your directions."

"As you will. I am wounded and I have no weapons." He showed no chagrin, the flame of his glance still shone brightly. "Have that rug removed." He touched the rich weave with his foot. Nothing showed beneath it save the pattern of the parquetry.

"The crimson inlay shifts," he said. "I pray you to examine the bolts about the collar of the mast where it goes through the floor. To press the one most aft. It shifts to the right." An officer stooped, fumbling. It was beginning to grow dusk in the cabin. The ironwork lantern that held six great candles had been shot away and lay twisted against a cushioned seat. But one of the undamaged candles was lit and held. There was a click and a section of the inlaid wood raised from the floor.

"Move it one side," ordered Montbars.

A gap appeared. The candle revealed an iron ring, sunk as if in a trapdoor. The captains left their seats and gathered round.

"There is your trove," said Montbars. "You have but to lift the ring. The trap fits closely. It will take a strong man."

The commander motioned to one of the guards. The man knelt and tugged. The ring came up in his hand with a slight grating noise. But there was no timbering attached. Instead a wire appeared. The voice of Montbars shouted triumphant.

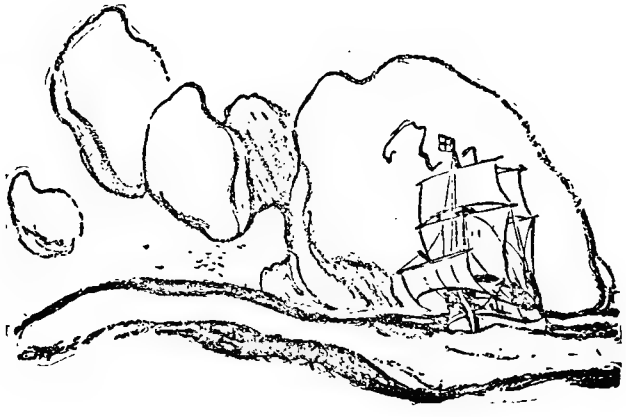
"Fools! The tally is complete!"

His laugh was broken by the sudden lifting of the cabin floor that heaved beneath their feet and sent them staggering. In their midst there opened an abyss through which flame burst with the roar of a volcano and the frightful force of exploding powder. Deep in the hold the tugged wire had released a trigger of flint that struck on steel and sent sparks showering into Montbars' mine.

In a spouting hell of fire and smoke the shattered timbers of deck and superstructure shot to the heavens, where the wheeling gulls fled affrighted, while the rent hull sunk, carrying with it the scorched bodies that had not been flung aloft in the explosion.

The fragments showered down again to the heaving surface. On the eight galleons the Spaniards crowded to the rails aghast at the catastrophe. The sun was level with the horizon. It dipped, half hidden, shooting out one last, level, crimson ray that lit the charred and smoking stump of a mizzenmast where silver studs winked as the timber rode the waves.

The swooping gulls came down, squawking, striking the surface violently as they fought and pecked viciously and hungrily over the fragments of their half-cooked feast.



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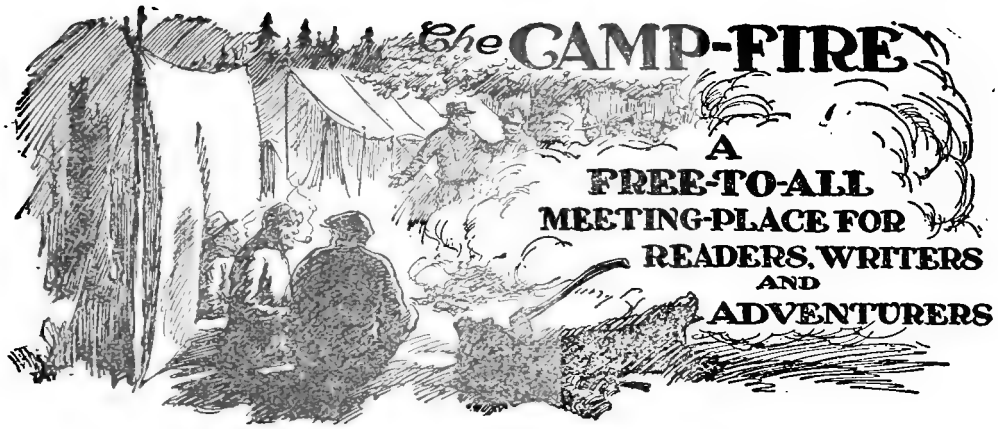

AN OLD comrade of ours, with a fine service record back of him and his shoulders squared for the future. He adds a word about dogs fooling alligators:

Washington, D. C.

Many things have happened to me since that time. I have been pensioned out of the Army for one thing and am now at the Home for the old and disabled soldiers of the Regular Army in Washington.

I AM not very badly disabled but enough to unfit the old soldier for further service, and am now laid up on the shelf for the rest of my life, I suppose. Well I can look back to twenty-two years' service and say that every single day of it was honest and faithful.

I never was in the guard-house, never was tried, never was absent from duty without leave, and served the U. S. Government through three wars, in Cuba, in the P. I., and through the World War in the States, and I had rather been on the other side than in the States drilling rookies any old time but they would not send me over.

Well, "here I is" and I am making the best of life as I find it, and working every day, for work is the best tonic I have ever found yet to keep a man in good shape and keep him from thinking over any troubles he may have, and most of the time manufacturing imaginary troubles.

I am a clerk in the office and get very good pay besides my pension, and all expenses so I can't kick about anything that I know of. But still the idea of being disabled is what I don't like, as I have lived outdoors, so to speak, ever since I was seventeen years old, and as I will soon be fifty, you can see that I have been out in God's free air for over thirty years, and most of that time in the big out-of-doors, and a lot of that time out in the wilds, so it rather goes against my grain to be laid up on the shelf, but I am thankful that I am no worse off than I am, and am as well situated as I am.

I CAN still go out into the big out-of-doors with *Adventure*, and follow the old trails to the land of the big woods and the mountains, thank God. If man made the cities, God certainly made the mountains, especially the Rockies.

I am a member of the V. F. W. and we just had a big convention in Washington, as you know, and we had a big time and it would have done you good to see the Vets. in line and see so many real Americans.

Well, as I have got to get to work and earn my pay, and it is nearly chow-time also—and that is one call no good soldier, young or old, lame or well, ought ever to miss, and I have seldom ever missed in all my service—I will stop while stopping is good. —WALLACE S. SIMMS.

P. S. The statement that a dog will go to a certain spot in the river and bark till he has got all the alligators to that spot, and then run up or down the river and cross, is no yarn. The dogs of Florida in our own country will do the same. I know this by personal observation, so our friend of the P. I. need not be leary about making that statement.—W. S. S.

WHEN "Fisherman's Luck" first came to the office we liked it but couldn't "believe it happened" because *Pierre Faidit* was *only sixteen years old*. We felt most of the rest of you would feel as we did and refuse to take seriously the idea that any mere boy could do what *Pierre* does in this story. So I wrote Mr. Brodeur on this point. His reply taught me a lot I didn't know about the fighting men of the Middle Ages. I had been doing exactly what he says in the following letter—measuring by the standards of present times.

But, agreeing with me that others of you would be as incredulous as we in the office had been, he made *Pierre* six years older in the story. Yet, so far as facts and history are concerned, he had been perfectly justified in making him only sixteen.

Probably most of you have no idea how much trouble we have over the general point involved here. Something comes up in a story sent to us which we don't believe and don't believe you would believe if you read the tale in the magazine. We write the author and query this point. Often he

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chuckles and writes back that this very thing did happen in real life or proves that it is justified by facts. Yes, but what good does that do if readers won't *believe* that it did but will consider it a break on the part of the author? Mr. Brodeur, on the other hand, was quick to see the difference between mere facts and facts that can be believed. A few writers we've dealt with have never been able to grasp this difference.

WE ARE going to meet *Pierre* again in future stories, and I'm giving you Mr. Brodeur's letter so that you will have a better understanding of conditions in the Middle Ages than I did and so that you will not make the mistake of thinking Mr. Brodeur does not have a thorough knowledge of the times and material he is handling. He is a professor of philology in the University of California, a recognized authority on much of the material he—alone or with Farnham Bishop—has used in various stories in our magazine, and the kind of workman who doesn't walk on ground he doesn't know thoroughly.

His letter wasn't intended for publication and he'll probably cuss me all around, but he's about to sail for Sweden and I'm trusting he'll forgive me by the time he gets back. Also, contrary to Camp-Fire custom, I'm not cutting out the praise of others of our writers that was in his letter. I want you to know the good comradeship that exists among our comrades of the writers' brigade.

University of California,
Berkeley, California.

My dear Mr. Hoffman:—Here is "Fisherman's Luck" again. I have carefully made all the changes. As a matter of pure fact, I could have justified myself at every point, but you were emphatically right in questioning every one, since I could not have got them over to the readers. For example, Louis VII was actually within an inch of capture by the Turk in 1149, having become separated from his bodyguard by their flight; but it would certainly seem improbable to the reader.

AS TO *Pierre's* age: I have set back the date of his birth, and extended his service in Toulouse from two years to eight, making him twenty-two instead of sixteen at the time of the siege. You're right in that matter too. I was blinded to it by my knowledge of historic fact. A great many distinguished soldiers of the Middle Ages saw their first campaigns at the age of fifteen or less. Conditions of life matured men earlier then, as the tropics mature both men and women earlier than temperate climates. But I had forgotten the point of view of the modern reader. Incidentally, I have slightly altered a couple of paragraphs to show that *Pierre's* luck would have been of little use to him if he had not had the wit and power to take advantage of it.

I want to tell you why my hero is represented as possessing "miraculous strength and prowess." When I first sketched the character of *Pierre Faidit*, he was far less perfect, though about as husky and valorous. He first turned up in those chapters of "Murkwood Spears" which had to be cut out in revision. In those chapters he was a much more lighthearted and frivolous chap—given to flirtation. But when I worked out the idea of the *Pierre* series he had to be made more perfect and less flirtatious. That made it impossible for *Pierre* to have harmless little vices—and a hero can't have big vices except in the kind of magazine for which I don't want to write.

AS FOR his great strength and prowess. I have constantly striven to make my atmosphere and general dope true to historic fact. I have deliberately refrained from using a good deal of picturesque material because it would not have been true to the times. Once, in "Camp-Fire," you commented on Bishop's stories and mine as giving a true picture of the times. I have always tried to live up to that and to write stories which would accurately illustrate history. It's always permissible for an author to use plots of pure fiction, but it's a crime for him to misrepresent the spirit of the times of which he writes. That's my creed.

Now, all through the Middle Ages, the men who had a real influence on their times—if they were soldiers, as all my heroes have been—were the men who possessed the greatest strength and courage. The medieval general didn't squat behind the lines; he pulled his trusty sword and mixed in. Unless he had the muscle and prowess to cut a bigger hole in the hostile lines than another could have done, his men would not have followed him. The leaders, in those times, were the hard-hitters—men like Bruce, Wallace, James Douglas, Richard Coeur de Leon, Henry the Lion, William the Conqueror. The fellows who didn't have "miraculous strength and prowess" either held subordinate positions, or didn't last long as leaders.

If my stories are to be true to the times, my heroes must illustrate this basic historical fact. Brains? Yes, brains counted, heavily. But no amount of brains, *in a soldier*, could compensate for a poor muscular equipment or low courage. Strategy and tactics were still darn primitive; battles were decided by beef and punch more than by brains. So my heroes had to have beef and punch—as the real heroes of the Middle Ages did. Now I could be false to history, and work out a hero who would win without beef and punch—but the only substitute for these qualities would have to be treachery, and a treacherous soldier is no hero. I warrant my stories to be historically sound. So, if yarns of the Middle Ages are to be published, their heroes, so far as I am concerned, must have great strength and courage—otherwise the stories would be false to fact.

WE ALL have a tendency to look at past ages with a modern squint—to think that they must be like our own except for picturesque language and costume. That's a great mistake. It's true that the essential stuff of human nature is always the

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same; but different ages have far different standards of morals, leadership and living generally. To represent an age correctly, a writer must know a great deal about the age and country of which he writes—as Harold Lamb knows a lot about Tatars and Cossacks. That's why Lamb's stories are so darn good. That's why Mundy's stories are good—he knows his time and country, and so can write about it with beautiful effectiveness. Now I claim to know a good bit about the Middle Ages in western Europe. As a writer I have an awful lot to learn—but the proper angle from which to criticize my stories is the angle you regularly take—that of plot and technic. I claim to be sound on my history and color.

I've said these things not to justify myself. A less perfect hero would be more widely interesting. I've said these things to show why my hero *must* be exceptional in physical type—so that you may understand my standards. In other words, I'm explaining what I think a story of the Middle Ages has in the way of limitations. As for my own limitations—oh gosh!—ARTHUR G. BRODEUR.

HERE'S a wandering comrade who wants to get in touch with some of his old cronies:

San Francisco, California.

Haven't seen a name or heard anything of any of the old-time T. T. T.'s or the S. I. bunch who used to bum around south of the Rio Grande. Come on, speak up and let's know where you all are. Some, I know "went west" over in Europe. Here's "how" on your trails, pals. Some I met again over in China and the Islands, but I want to hear of some of you hoboes who are in Central or S. A. As for the rest of you hoboes, I will say that I have been in Central and South America since 1906 on and off with short trips to Asia and the South Seas.

I WAS with the Central Argentine Railroad when the big oil boom hit the Argentine and went to C. Rivadavia. And, believe me, those were some exciting times. Those were the days of the Faron and Punal. After that I went to work with the Cerro de Pasco outfit, afterward crossing the Andes and Brazil and located with the Rio Barmose outfit, running transit and fighting Indians and mosquitoes. In these parts a fellow needs four hands, working and at the same time keeping tap on the brush so you can fool those Cashiba Indian varmints. Some fun. Came back to the States in '15 for the S. F. Exposition and grabbed a job as interpreter with the Cuban commission. During '16 and '17 I behaved myself (some) working for the Geological Survey chasing water.

IN '18 I went down into Mexico, Yucatan and the South, mining land surveys and doing a little side line with my old sweetheart, a very much up-to-date machine-gun. Do you know, fellows, there is a fascination in that which can't be beat anywhere. I have ridden bad horses, driven machines, some, been in gun and knife fights, but when I sit down behind the business end of a M. G. I'm perfectly happy. Those little babies and I understand each other; no fights, as there sure would be if it was a woman.

Got back last August trying to please my people and settle down, but how can a fellow? Every time I look at the ocean it seems as if it calls to me "Come on and look us over." Get up and hit the trail. There is a little old five-year hydro-electro power job in Brazil starting up and another one in Burma, so I don't know where I will be next.

But listen here, *Paisanos*, hit the Camp-Fire and let me know because the way I feel now I think I will be in Peru and the near end of Bolivia and Brazil next. Got a tip that there is something doing.

Some of you who know me in Rio or B. A., or Monty, let's hear from you. Hope this did not tire the rest of you huskies. If I was a writer I would tell you of some things I have seen other men do, but the only time I feel like talking is under the open sky with a little fire burning and the smell of an *asado* in the air and not to forget the old black briar pipe going full blast.

Here's how, have to mush to Seattle tonight.—GEORGE A. D'REGER.

A VERY interesting suggestion for a permanent and unusual monument to a great adventurer, one who was an unfailing member of our Camp-Fire. The expense of sending the bricks from far parts of the world would be a very heavy item. Perhaps small stones could be sent instead.

Those interested should write direct to Mr. Waddell.

1460 S. W. 4th Street,
Miami, Florida.

The plan is simple and I think it would be inexpensive, yet would build a fitting memorial to the greatest of all adventurers, next to Richard I of England.

The idea is this: let each reader of our magazine, or as many as will, each send $2 and a brick to some place designated to erect a building in memory of Colonel Roosevelt.

The building could be used as a headquarters for the Stations now being organized by Camp-Fire. Also as kind of museum, where adventurers could send curios picked up in different parts of the world, or for any other purpose that might be suggested.

The idea of sending a brick each is the beauty of it, as it will give every section, country and clime a more personal feeling of having done something to honor the name of a great American that was unusually loved and respected.

I hope that you understand just what I am trying to tell. I am poor at putting things on paper. You see, this is to be a universal building, and the brick from India would repose next the brick from the Flowery Kingdom, both speaking the same language of respect for a great man.

If two per each would not defray the cost of building, make it more, $5 or even more if necessary.—R. M. WADDELL.

HIS story in this issue is only the first of a number of yarns woven about the old pirates of the Spanish Main. Concerning the real men he has taken for characters in these stories, J. Allan Dunn tells us the following:

Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

I have taken the incidents from sources that are

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supposed to be authentic, including accounts written at the time of Tortuga's importance as a buccaneer rendezvous and the headquarters of the Brethren of the Coast. These accounts prove a bit scanty with regard to Montbars the Exterminator; he is a vaguer figure than the others. With him I had to draw upon my imagination more largely. With the rest I have stuck to the facts as known, adding to them such happenings as might plausibly occur, trying to make these buccaneers men of actual flesh and blood and describe the reactions natural to their characters, to reconstruct them from the scrapheap of the past.

It may or may not interest those who read these yarns to know that the main facts of Pierre le Grand are as I have set them down, that Esquemeling vouches for most of the details of Barthelemy Portuguese's exploits and that the descriptions of Tortuga and the general topography have been carefully checked up.

To me they were romantic figures, these buccaneers, many of whom never saw a wild bull or a boucan-hut but were primarily plunderers of the Spanish. A red-blooded, hard-fighting, hard-swearing, swashbuckling, wine-woman-and-song lot who were not, for all their sins, all of them just bloody butchers.—J. A. D.

FROM a comrade in Australia, who has seen and done quite a little in his day:

Lavender Bay, Sydney, Australia.

Don't know whether this will ever see the light under "Camp-Fire" heading, but if it does I bows and says as how:

I HAVE been a "Constant Reader" for years and although a rolling stone for many years, with tons of reminiscent matter stored away in my cranium, have not worried you before with any of it.

After journeying all over your continent, Canada, down South, England, Wales, and spending several years at sea, I finally decided to try my luck in this sunny land, and as a newspaper man I settled down. Years of pitching sheaves, ploughing, doing the chores and hopping around in the Middle and North Wests, I decided to find something easier and found it.

A trip or two as "Purser's dip" and as ship's steward got me properly full up of the sea, especially as most of the time I was situated in the tropics, and then I saw Fleet Street with its million and one newspaper offices. A chance story I picked up influenced the rest of my life. I secured a good journalistic job on the strength of a yarn and since then, although I have written in many lands and climes, have never looked back. Am still hovering around the thirty mark, with about eighteen good years of first-class adventurous life to fall back on.

FIVE years ago I threw up a job as reporter on an obscure Australian journal and took to publicity with a big boxing concern in Sydney. Here I am still, spinning yarns for the benefit of a credulous public and picking up material for a book. Some of the things I have written actually happened, but for the main part I have drawn on my imagination. I have written six or seven different stories, all of a different class and situated in different parts of the world, ranging from a steward's "glory hole" to a mountain mining town eight hundred miles from nowhere in the Australian desert.

I've slept in haymows out in Manitoba, on the bare decks of stinking P. & O. liners, in mining humpies five thousand feet above sea-level in the middle of Winter, on loads of white fife wheat in Alberta with the glass sixty degrees below, and in North Queensland without a mosquito-net with the glass at 125 at midnight. I've humped "bluey," stepped the ties in Oregon, helped to clear up "Frisco" after the quake, and helped to push Willie the Hun back into his place.—REG. T. EDWARDS.

EXACTLY as Dr. Cochrane says, the Nameless Order that figures in his story in this issue and has figured in some of his others, is an interesting subject for thought in its possibilities and probabilities. The following are really extracts from two letters, and the reference to an earlier letter refers to one in "Camp-Fire" some years ago when this order first appeared in one of the *Sled Wheeler* stories.

East Dorset, Vermont.

. . . Brer Haase evidently has not followed the *Wheeler* stories exhaustively, or he would have seen other references to a "society." But he is off in one exasperating particular of said society, which is that it is essentially and preeminently *not* a society of crooks. In so far as it is possible to know anything about such a hypothetical order as The Order That Is Not, it is made up of men at the head of active operations in widely different walks of life—and for the most part unknown to one another. No doubt he has only his dim and partial recollections of the one story from which to speak.

By its very nature that order is incapable of more definite and satisfactory treatment. It lends itself to endless speculation, but can not be nailed down by hard facts of time, space or personalities—has no name, no rites nor symbols, and so can not be treated in formulas made up of words. So far as words are concerned, it *does not exist*. It simply *acts*. Even these propositions concerning it can be proved only by exclusion.

All this is fruitless, if fascinating, speculation. I mention it only because I have had some letters that show that the Order has proved as interesting and elusive to some readers of the *Wheeler* stories as it has been to me, and I believe it would rob the subject of its attraction to offer a complete solution or explanation. Any such exposition would have to be pure fiction and would be disappointing.

AGAIN, it occurs to me that the Nameless Order was explained as far as it is possible to explain it in a letter anent an earlier tale—that nevertheless many a reader may ask "*Is* there any such?" So I repeat:

It is impossible to say anything definite about a thing that has no name—which is known only by its acts, and these effected by persons ignorant of their reasons therefor. I can only say that I had evidence of my own senses pointing that way—to the existence of some such agency, an agency that by its very nature is incapable of being traced or exposed, for the simple reason that there is nothing

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to expose. No name, no rites, no places or times of meeting—the membership (if such there be) known only to a small Inner Circle. It is obvious that any man coming in contact with the power of such an agency would have the strongest motive for silence—the fear of ridicule—even supposing he had anything to reveal. And such an Order would be so constituted that there would be practically nothing *to* reveal. The cohesive force would of course be *personal* and moral obligations, and—that's all I know, all anybody can know, so far as I can see. But it is an interesting subject for thought in its possibilities and probabilities.—J. I. COCHRANE.

AN UNUSUAL and extremely interesting glimpse of California Joe:

Noroton Heights, Connecticut.

In re California Joe, I served from April, 1861, until September 25, 1865, continuously, in the 1st Conn. Hvy. Arty., originally the 4th Conn. Infy., and as it was my fortune to see California Joe, will relate the incident.

DURING the siege of old Yorktown one of our heavy advanced batteries was much annoyed by a sharpshooter in the Confederate lines, firing from the chimney of a house standing within the lines of the Confederates. He had knocked a brick from the side of chimney facing our batteries and fired through the aperture, wounding or killing several men in front of our works. Our gunners, also sharpshooters, were unable to stop him.

One day an oldish looking man in rather shabby clothing came along into the battery saying he was a sharpshooter with a roving commission from the commanding general (McClellan) and was looking over the situation along the lines. Of course, the men in the battery told him about the rebel sharpshooter and laughingly told him "there was a good chance to show his skill." After hearing their account he carefully examined his old rifle (as long as he was himself, if I remember rightly), stepped up on the breastwork and slightly moved as the flash came at the chimney, and, as the smoke cleared, threw up his rifle and fired. Stepping down, he said, "I got him," and coolly reloaded.

HE WAS not inclined to talk nor boast. His rifle-stock was notched a number of times. Also had been broken and tied up. When asked about the notches he said each one meant a Redskin wiped out, on the plains. We thought he must be fifty or sixty years old, as his hair was grizzled and his shoulders somewhat stooped, but he seemed to be all bone and muscle, his movements as springy as an athlete. My memory is poor on many points but I can see "Old Joe" with my mind's eye.—WALTER F. SAGE.

AS YOU know, Talbot Mundy spent most of 1920 in Arabia and Palestine, a particularly fine place in those days to gather good material for adventure stories. Along with his next story he's going to tell Camp-Fire something about the real facts back of these tales of *Jimgrim*, the first of which appears, complete, in this issue. So I'll say nothing more about them now.

THIS sounds like authoritative data on the San Blas country, barred to white men, concerning which claims are frequently made as to traversing it. The mere absence of specimens, however, would not in itself disprove a man's claims to having crossed this "hostile" territory. The explanation given concerning the three different tribes inhabiting this land will help clear up some of the statements made by travelers and explorers.

Panama, Canal Zone.

I have been much interested in reading the communication from Major Bonner in regard to Capt. Fitz-William and the San Blas country. Whether or not Capt. Fitz-William accomplished any noteworthy feat by going through the "San Blas country" depends entirely upon just what is meant by that term. Unfortunately, in all the discussions I have seen regarding this subject there has been a great lack of definite information and facts regarding this matter, with the result that no opinion can be formed as to the validity of the claims made.

THERE are three distinct tribes of Indians inhabiting the Darien district of Panama. Along the Atlantic coast and on the outlying islands are the San Blas Indians, who are really Towalis. These people are a short, dark race and are fairly well civilized. Most of them are Christians and the men make regular visits to Colon to sell coconuts and ivory nuts and one can see a number of them on the streets of Colon almost every day. Most of the men have served as sailors on American merchant ships and one chief, Charley Robinson, has been a sailor and whaler and has visited practically all the seaports of the world. He talks English fluently, as do most of the men, and is an adept with East Side and waterfront slang and oaths. These people and their country are well known and, while they formerly objected to strangers remaining in their villages overnight, they are not hostile and a number of Panamanians and a few Americans live in their settlements. Among these is an American lady missionary who has been with them for several years. Rex Beach visited these San Blas Indians and secured motion pictures, and it is a common thing for parties of American officers and civilians to visit the Indians. There is not the slightest difficulty or objection to any one visiting them or going through their country.

INLAND from these San Blas Indians and occupying the country between the Cordilleras and the Pacific coastal range is the Kuna country, which is the so-called "forbidden district." The Kunas are divided by the natives into two groups, "wild" and "tame" (*bravo* and *manso*) Kunas. The "tame" Kunas dwell about the headwaters of the Capetti, Pucro and other tributaries of the Tuira River. They are merely isolated villages and families of the "wild" Kunas who have given up certain customs and habits and are on more or less friendly terms with the Panamanians and with other Indians. These "tame" Kunas do not welcome strangers, but neither do they object strenuously to their visits, and there is no danger or difficulty in traveling through their country.

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FURTHER inland and inhabiting the district about the Chukunaque River and its tributaries between the Membrillo and the source of the Chepo River are the "wild" Kunas. Although called wild, yet in many ways these Indians are quite civilized. Many of them wear shirts and trousers and nearly all wear some sort of garment, although when in the bush they strip to breech-clout. They are a light-yellow, distinctly Mongolian race, in fact the most strikingly Mongolian Indians I have ever seen, and many of their customs and habits, as well as their language, are of unquestionable Mongolian origin.

They are a larger, stronger race than the Chokois or Towalis and are far more intelligent. They are adepts at textile work and weave beautiful hammocks and cloth from the wild cotton. They are also expert wood workers and have magnificently carved dance-sticks, gods, stools, etc. Although many possess guns, their favorite weapons are bows and arrows, blow-guns and poisoned darts and spears. Their houses are well made of wild cane and thatch, and are raised about ten feet from the ground on posts, but, unlike the houses of the Chokois, are walled from eaves to ground.

The women are kept secluded in separate buildings and rarely venture out in the sunlight, only going to the river for water or to bathe in the early morning or late in the afternoon. The ordinary costume of the women is a Chinese-like coat and trousers made of cotton of various colors sewn together in gorgeous geometrical patterns. This has been copied by the San Blas or Towali Indians, who make their dresses of bright-colored calico sewn in "appliqué" manner on hand sewing-machines. Many of the Kuna women, however, wear merely a kirtle or skirt consisting of a single piece of home-spun cotton woven in geometrical designs. The Kuna women do no manual labor and according to the men are very delicate. They all wear triangular-shaped nose-rings of gold and other gold ornaments and the men paint their entire bodies and faces in solid colors, leaving huge circles of contrasting colors about the eyes and mouth, and this, in connection with their long hair, which is usually looped up on one side and secured with a peculiar comb of palm and mother-of-pearl, gives them a very savage appearance.

Further to the south on the Pacific side of the watershed and along the main rivers are the Chokois, a brown, short, peaceful, good-natured tribe who still live as primitively as their ancestors in the days of Balboa, but who are now a rather degenerate race through contact with the Panamanians.

Now if Captain Fitz-Williams or the other claimants to fame for having gone through the "San Blas" country will only explain just what district they refer to and what tribe they mean by "San Blas" we may be able to reach some understanding. To go through the "San Blas" country in certain directions is simple. There is no difficulty whatever in going from the San Blas coast across to either the Tuira, Chepo or Chukunaque, the latter being the old Balboa route, and the trails across from Atlantic to Pacific via the Mamoni and Chepo from the Gulf of San Blas or *via* the Tapisa from Armila are in daily use by Indians and Panamanians. If, on the other hand, Captain Fitz-Williams or the others claim to have traveled up the Chukunaque and down the Chepo through the heart of the wild Kuna district, I seriously question their statements, for the Kuna chiefs claim no stranger has ever done this. In fact, it is claimed by these Kunas that no strangers have ever penetrated their territory and returned alive, while they also claim that they never kill an intruder until he has been warned to turn back and fails to do so.

Personally, I do not claim to have gone through this territory, but while exploring and studying the wild tribes of Darien in the interests of the Museum of the American Indian of New York, I ent red the wild Kuna country and was two weeks among these people and was assured by them that no other white man had done as much.

IF CAPTAIN FITZ-WILLIAM and the others actually entered the wild Kuna country why did they not bring out collections or at least publish some account of the Kunas for the benefit of science? During my stay among these Kunas I secured a collection of nearly 1,000 specimens of their implements, weapons, ornaments, gods, utensils and manufactures and this collection can be seen at the Museum of the American Indian, 155th Street and Broadway, New York, and, so far as known, it is the only collection of wild Kuna material ever brought out. In addition, there are my photographs, measurements, vocabularies and other scientific data obtained during my stay among them. It is greatly to be regretted that those who have claimed to have gone through the "San Blas" district did not secure collections of some sort, not only for the benefit of ethnologists but also to prove their claims, for it is a very easy matter to claim to have been in a locality where no one else has been, but proof is another matter.

Regarding the possession of the "carved cane" by Captain Fitz-William, I presume the writer of the article refers to one of the carved sticks used by the Kunas (as well as by the Towalis and Chokois) in certain dances and ceremonials. I may add that there are about a dozen of these in the collections I secured, and that any one who can secure one by gift or trade is entitled to carry it, if he desires. They do not, however, clothe the owner with any authority whatever. I am enclosing herewith a few photographs of the Darien Indians which may interest you.—A. HYATT VERRILL.

OUR Camp-Fire Stations are growing steadily in number and all of us have reason to be proud of this practical and interesting result of our good-fellowship.

For some reason it has always been difficult to make sufficiently plain that any one who wants to be a member of Camp-Fire becomes one automatically and at once. Wanting to belong is the only requisite to membership, for wanting to means an interest in the things all the rest of us are interested in and a desire to be a comrade among us. That's all that's necessary to make you a member and put the privileges of the Stations within your grasp.

Here is a letter from one of the Stations that is taking advantage of its opportunities

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to develop into a strong local club with good times for itself and a splendid welcome to other Camp-Fire members who happen into St. Louis. There is no reason why a city of the size of St. Louis can't build up a strong local club running into hundreds of members if desired. They already have an excellent nucleus of the right kind of men and are far-sighted in planning at once for a permanent meeting-place. In choosing a house-boat for this purpose it would seem that comrade Hoyt and his associates have hit upon a novel and particularly appropriate idea.

These letters from Keepers of Stations are not only interesting but extremely valuable. Through reports like this each Station can be kept in touch with the progress of all the other Stations and can often glean ideas that are helpful and suggestive. Naturally no Station can at once blossom into a large and fully developed local club, but by sharing their ideas a small start will gradually grow into a surprizingly large accomplishment.

St. Louis, Missouri.

Signs and Register have been received, also letter. Think a (71) Club will be functioning before long here, with some good members on the Charter List. It's our intention to procure a house-boat for a meeting-place, with a motorboat and other boats for river use; as a person can have a good time on the upper and lower Mississippi. Have an old-time river captain, a friend of Captain Hanson's of South Dakota, an old sea captain, two soldiers of fortune, a couple of Canadians with Over Seas Service, some of the members of the 1st Division U. S. and an old-time Westerner, along with men who were in the Army and Navy before the Spanish-American War. There will be a flag on the houseboat bearing the mysterious colors and 71, as on the signs and buttons, and all wearers of 71 will be welcome to a seat around the Camp-Fire on proper identification. We are going to try and make a go of the St. Louis Station, with nothing to sell, but a welcome to all and where help is needed to always remember the Golden Rule.

I WILL let you know when our club here is in operation and the latch-string will always be on the outside for the wearer of 71. All letters will be answered by me personally to any one that writes to this Station.

To have a pleasure club open to all members of Camp-Fire with a prospect of outings to some good fishing and hunting places will be our aim and we have them in this neck of the woods, only a few hours ride from St. Louis by auto—and nothing beats a fishing trip on the river.

Remember a Broadway car, south, will bring them to a good bunch in about six weeks, where we can build a camp-fire on the banks of the river and look out over the waters and let memory run riot to the smell of a camp-fire's sweet pungent smoke.—WILLARD R. HOYT, 7206 Minnesota Avenue.

A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necesary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazine is that stated above and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

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No. 37—CANAL ZONE—Cristobal. F. E. Stevens.

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No. 80— Detroit. R. A. Taylor, 5129 Maybury Grand.

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No. 70—SPANISH HONDURAS. Jos. Buckly Taylor, H. S. D. Co., Monte Cristo, La Ceiba.

No. 8—SOUTH CAROLINA—Allendale. Ed. N. Clark, Editor-Owner *The Tri-County Record* and Allendale *Advance*.

No. 54—TEXAS—Houston. M. B. Couch, Route 2, Box 189.

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No. 1— Ione. A. S. Albert, Albert's Billiard Hall.
No. 12— Seattle. H. C. Copeland, *The Western Sportsman*, 83 Columbia St.
No. 61— Burlington. Judge B. N. Alberson, Fairhaven Ave.
No. 7— La Connor. Ed. L. Carson.
No. 71— Charleston. Elmer E. McLean, Box 561.

No. 48—WEST VIRGINIA—Huntington. John Geiske, 1682 Sixth St.

No. 41—WISCONSIN—Madison. Frank Weston, Room 9, Tenny Bldg.
No. 5— Milwaukee. Paul A. Buerger, Apt. 2, 150 Biddle Street.
No. 72— Kenosha. Leland Birchard, 304 Marion Ave.

YOUR old magazines or books, why not send them to the Army and Navy hospitals for our comrades there? Here are those for our own country. The lists from the Canadian Government have not yet reached me.

First, for the U. S. Army.

Walter Reed General Hospital, Takoma Park, D. C.; Letterman General Hospital, Presidio of San Francisco, Calif.; Fitzsimons General Hospital, Denver, Colo.; Army & Navy General Hospital, Hot Springs, Ark.; William Beaumont General Hospital, El Paso, Tex.; Station Hospital, Fort Sam Houston, Tex.

For the U. S. Navy and Marine Corps address the U. S. Naval Hospitals at the following places:

Annapolis, Md.; Canacao, P. I.; Charleston, S. C.; Chelsea, Mass.; Fort Lyon, Colo.; Great Lakes, Ill.; Guam, M. I.; Hampton Roads, Va.; Key West, Fla.; League Island, Pa.; Mare Island, Calif.; New Orleans, La.; Newport, R. I.; New York, N. Y.; Norfolk, Va.; Olongapo, P. I.; Parris Island, S. C.; Pearl Harbor, T. H.; Pensacola, Fla.; Portsmouth, N. H.; Puget Sound, Wash.; Quantico, Va.; San Diego, Calif.; St. Thomas, V. I.; Washington, D. C.; Yokohama, Japan.

And here is a list of the Canadian marine hospitals, which comes with the request that magazines sent to them be addressed to the superintendent of each.

Louisburg, N. S.; Lunenburg, N. S.; Sydney, N. S.

AFTER their names were printed on the cover of this issue the stories by Ray McGillivray and Lloyd Kohler had to be taken out because there had been a very bad clerical mistake in estimating the number of words scheduled for this issue. As covers are printed considerably before the text, it was too late to make a corresponding change there. Sorry. You'll get their stories in later issues.—A. S. H.

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VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

These services of *Adventure* are free to any one. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you **read and observe the simple rules,** thus saving needless delay and trouble for us. The whole spirit of the magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help we're ready and willing to try. **Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.**

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *post-paid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of the last issue of each month.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 109 Mountfort St., Boston, Mass., can supply Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL SELL: July, Dec., 1912. Jan., Feb., March, Nov., Dec., 1913. Jan., 1914 to date complete except Nov., 1914. All in good condition. Best offer accepted.—Address C. R. ROLLINGS, 6174 16th St., Detroit, Mich.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Camp-Fire Stations

In their homes or shops some members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to—maintain Stations where wanderers may call and receive such hospitality as the Keeper wishes to offer. The only requirements are that the Station display the regular sign, provide a box for mail to be called for and keep the regular register book. Otherwise Keepers run their Stations to suit themselves and are not responsible to this magazine or representative of it. List of Stations and further details are published in the Camp-Fire in the first issue of each month.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 519 Citizens Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

1. The Sea Part 1
BERIAH BROWN, 1508 Columbia St., Olympia, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next section.*)

2. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

3. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

4. ★ New Zealand and the South Sea Islands Part 1
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa. Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (*Postage 8 cents.*)

5. South Sea Islands Part 2
CHARLES BROWN, JR., 213 E St., San Rafael, Calif. French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumoto, Marquesas); Islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn). Natives, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture.

6. ★ Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, Sydney Press Club, 51 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

7. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, natives, history, institutions.

8. New Guinea
DR. ALBERT BUELL LEWIS, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, natives, history, institutions.

9. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, 5444 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, Calif. History, natives, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

10. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 632 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

11. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

12. Asia, Southern
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, 1315 Josephine St., New Orleans, La. Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, western China, Borneo. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

13. Russia and Eastern Siberia
MAJOR A. M. LOCHWITZKY (formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), care *Adventure*. Petrograd and its province, Finland, northern Caucasus, Primorsk district, island of Sakhalien. Travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

14. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Carmel, Monterey Co., Calif. Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, Niger River to Jebba, northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora, tribal histories, witchcraft.

15. Africa Part 2 Morocco
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents—in Mr. Mills' case 8 cents—in stamps NOT attached)*

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16. Africa Part 3 Tripoli
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, 1315 Josephine Street, New Orleans, La. Including the Sahara Tuaregs and caravan routes. Traveling, exploring, customs, caravan trade.

17. ✠ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East Africa
R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

18. ★ Africa Part 5 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, Ile de Lerne, par Vannes, Morbihan, Brittany, France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport. (*Postage 12 cents.*)

19. Africa Part 6 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand
CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, 40 South Clark St., Chicago, Ill. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

20. South America Part 1
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

21. South America Part 2
P. H. GOLDSMITH, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Venezuela, the Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentine Republic. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, natives, languages, hunting and fishing.

22. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, language, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

23. Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, natives, hunting, history, industries.

24. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California
C. R. MAHAFFEY, Apartado 168, Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, natives, business and general conditions.

25. ✠ North American Snow Countries Part 1
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Height of Land and northern Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); southeastern Ungava and Keewatin. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

26. ✠ North American Snow Countries Part 2
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Ottawa Valley and southeastern Ontario. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping, aviation. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

27. ✠ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Tweed, Ont., Canada. Georgian Bay and southern Ontario. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

28. North American Snow Countries Part 4
T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Hunters Island and English River district. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

29. North American Snow Countries Part 5
ED. L. CARSON, La Connor, Wash. Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

30. ✠ North American Snow Countries Part 6
REECE H. HAGUE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

31. ✠ North American Snow Countries Part 7
JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada. New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and southeastern Quebec. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

32. North American Snow Countries Part 8
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, backpacking, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

33. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

34. Western U. S. Part 2
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Texas and Oklahoma. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

35. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. The Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. Early history of Missouri Valley.

36. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

37. Middle Western U. S. Part 3
LARRY ST. JOHN, Saugatuck, Mich. Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Lake Michigan. Fishing, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, clamming, early history, legends.

38. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs, and their markets.

39. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Orlando, Fla. Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

40. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me. Maine. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

WEAPONS, PAST and PRESENT

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A.—All Shotguns including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers including foreign and American makes. D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

C.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1800. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and advice; live bait; camping outfits; fishing trips.

MOUNTAINS and MOUNTAINEERING

Especially mountains of New England. Arthur Bent, Appalachian Mountain Club, 1050 Tremont Bldg., Boston, Mass.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines, Porto Rico, and customs receiverships in Santo Domingo and Haiti, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union may be called upon for general information relating to Latin-American matters or for specific data. Address L. S. Rowe, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For R. C. M. P., Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Comm., Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents—in Mr. Beadle's case 12 cents—in stamps NOT attached*)
✠ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

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The *Kanim*

IT'S a Hydah Indian's idea of a dugout—the kind of dugout, that is, that gives you a chance to paddle; not the trench variety that sets a man to "reading his shirt:"

Question.—"I would like very much to have some information about the cedarwood canoes used by the Haida of the Queen Charlotte Islands.

How high and how thick were the trees used for these canoes? What was their average and extreme length?

How were they manned?

What was their probable speed when paddled by a full crew at ordinary speed and racing speed? Could such canoes compare in speed with the shells used in a modern college race?

Is there a book dealing with this subject and also covering other forms of canoes used by uncivilized tribes in different parts of the world?

I have recently read "Footprints of Vanished Races," by Conant, and he suggests that the Mound-Builders must have carried on their trade and communications by means of some form of canoe which would enable them to make long voyages up and down the various rivers in the Mississippi Basin."—FRED. K. SCHWALM, St. Louis, Mo.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—I never measured a Hydah (Haida) canoe or *kanim;* but here is a method of reckoning that will give you a fair idea of their size. The largest were manned by from twelve to fourteen paddlers, double row; that is, two men to a seat. It would require at least five feet to the paddler to give him working room, so that there would need to be from thirty to thirty-five feet of "engine-room." Add to this the amount of space devoted to cargo, sometimes three or four tons, and fifty feet over all would be, in my opinion, a fair estimate of their length with four or five feet beam.

You will note that I am not speaking with any absolute certainty because I do not want some son of a rooster to jump up in Camp-Fire and tell me he measured several thousand of these craft in the public library of Heck's Crossroads and that my measurements are from six to eight inches wrong. I am giving you the size to the best of my observation.

As to the size of the tree from which this canoe was made, well, there are plenty of cedars in B. C. that measure seven feet across the stump and stand a couple of hundred feet high. Such a tree as this would probably be used.

Again I want to warn you that there are much bigger cedars in this country and that I am speaking solely from surmise. There is a cedar stump on the Pacific Highway about thirty miles south of here that has a roadway cut through it, and I have driven an auto through it several times with plenty of room to spare. I suppose that the Hydahs would select a tree near the size of the *kanim* desired, thus saving labor of hewing it down to size with the primitive adzes they used.

These *kanims* were manned by a row of paddlers along each side with a pilot standing on a platform at the stern steering with a sweep.

As for their speed, five miles per hour in still water was fair work; and as for racing, any time they got up to ten they were sure going some. They compared with the modern college shell just as the average scientific production compares with that of barbarism.

My deductions are based from seeing the Siwashes coming up the Skeena River at the close of the fishing season. Once they trusted to the Hudson Bay steamers to bring their Winter supplies up from Port Essington—the *Spoke-shoot*, or place of meeting, as they called it in early days—but unfortunately the steamer *Northwest* ran on a rocky bar and sunk, thus causing the loss of all their flour and so forth.

That settled it. Never again. They revised the *kanim* style of transportation as being slightly slower but much safer.

By means of a big square sail a heap of *skookum mammook* or hard work could be saved, for the prevailing winds in Fall blew straight up the river, and with "safety first" for their motto they handled their own transportation.

As to a book on this subject, I do now know of any, but your local librarian should be able to give you this information.

Do not get the idea that the *kanims* of this rather superior Indian race were light, graceful craft which could be propelled easily with the speed of a modern gas-boat. They were no such animile. On the contrary, an ordinary Peterboro has them skinned a cityful of blocks when it comes to ease in paddling.

The *kanim* is awkward and heavy, and in a light head current is very heavy paddling. In a stiff current there is only one way to make up-stream; that is to get out and wade with a tow-line over your shoulder; and even this delightful experience loses a lot of its charm after you have stepped on a smooth stone and taken an unexpected bath.

Climate of West Africa

WHITE men are paid high in that territory. "There's a reason."

Question:—"I have hired with the Stewart Construction to go to the Gold Coast as a locomotive engineer on that big Government contract. Will you please tell me the living conditions in that country, and if it is a fever country? I can not seem to get any accurate information here as some people claim it is no worse than Panama was before the Canal was built and others claim it is certain death to go there.

Will that country ever be fit for a man to take his family to?"—CHAS. CALLAGHAN, Vancouver, B. C.

Answer, by Mr. Miller:—A man should take serious thought before accepting an appointment in West Africa. A healthy young man between twenty-five and thirty should have nothing to fear from a three-years' contract—which is the customary contract, for no white can stand more than three years in one dose—if he keeps occupied, keeps a grip on himself morally and physically. He is bound to get fever, and the longer he stays in the country the worse will be the fever, for his resistance weakens. In time he dies or acclimates.

To any one over forty, unless he goes out to some light Government or administrative job, with the pleasure of official life and the constant moving around—to those over forty I would say, "Keep off." Particularly this applies to mechanics.

Unless a man goes out for a very large concern, whose employees are so many that they can make

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their own society, the man who works with his hands is apt to find the class lines so tightly drawn as to isolate him. He has to live on canned food, work under a tropical sun, suffer the frets and annoyances of negro labor, take quinin every night, and in the end he comes out of the country with what is called "Tropikitis," which is that the snap is gone out of him.

It is not white man's country, and decidedly not white woman's. Some of the higher officials have their wives out for a few months, but old coasters condemn the experiment.

A few missionary women are there. But you won't find a trader's wife or workingman's wife or white child or boy or girl in the whole of West Africa.

You certainly could not take children. But if your wife is a bright woman, interested in books and nature and such, it is possible that she could put up with West Africa and even enjoy it.

It may be that a large construction company would build a small ice-plant and have fresh meat for their employees. Owing to the few whites and their scattered remoteness there are no modern conveniences, at least not away from the few larger towns of the coast.

You are no doubt tempted by the high salaries of West Africa, which are high because of the risks, and if you have a sense of humor and get along well with your fellows—have a cheerful outlook on life—you might find West Africa a wonderful experience and a thoroughly enjoyable one. But think three times before taking a wife there.

So much depends on the personnel and organization of the company. When I was in Nigeria we suffered many discomforts, particularly in diet, simply because it was nobody's particular business to attend to that. The colored cooks were impossible. An apple was a luxury, though I experimented myself and found that apples could be easily introduced. But whites drift into easy-going ways out there, and as I said lose their snap.

I suppose your contract stipulated free passage home in case of a sickness that incapacitates you. The trouble is, your passage would depend on the certification of the company's doctor to your sickness, and the doctor won't do that unless you're in a pretty bad way. Personally it took me many years to recover from West Africa, and I was a young man.

Wants a Throwing-Knife

CAN any one add to the information Mr. Barker gives this inquirer?

Question:—"I have been trying to find a knife, sheath variety, which will measure up to the following requirements:

Length of blade: between 4½ and 5½ inches.

The blade to be heavier than the hilt for throwing purposes, and preferably double-edged.

Could you inform me where I might procure such a knife, and the approximate price?"—A. HELD, New York.

Answer, by Mr. Barker:—I am not particularly familiar with throwing-knives, nor do I think they are manufactured extensively. Sheath knives are not as a rule double-edged.

I have in my collection a Spanish throwing-knife, the blade of which is 5¼ inches and the haft 6 inches, the blade of which is heavier, I should say, than the haft. It closes into the haft, but has teeth and a ring so that it can be held firmly open at four different angles. Here is an illustration of the same. The haft is of bone and brass. It is single-edged. It cost at a weapon auction about $4.

MR BARKER'S THROWING-KNIFE

KNIFE CLOSED

I can not inform you just where to find what you wish or the approximate price. My advice would be to look in the sporting stores, and, failing to find what you want, get a knife with such a blade as you desire, and then have a hilt made to suit you in weight and shape, which could be done by any large cutlery concern. Regret that I can give you no more definite information.

Sailing the Straits of Magellan

HERE'S a handful of practical tips for those who want to try it in a small boat:

Question:—"I am seriously thinking of taking a trip in a small boat entirely around the coast of South America, and would like to become as familiar as possible with that coast by studying the reliable sailing-charts so as to be able to avoid the most dangerous places.

I am anxious to buy reliable sailing-charts covering the Magellan Straits and the sea and coast in and around Cape Horn.

What would a set of these charts cost me, new or second hand? Where could I send for them?

What part of the coast is dangerous to small boats of say one hundred feet long and under?

Is most of this section of the coast uninhabited?

Are the natives friendly to whites?

Would it be dangerous for two white men to make this trip?

Is there any particular district where a white man could trade with the natives?

Would it require a license?

What would be the safest time of the year for a small boat to pass through the Straits of Magellan?"—NORMAN BRICE, Grandfield, Okla.

Answer, by Capt. Dingle:—A lot of your questions can be answered in a lump. Send 50c to the Hydrographic Office of the Navy, Washington, for their catalog of charts and sailing-directories. These will give you all the information you need concerning the coasts, if you select those which cover your route.

Charts cost anywhere from 30c to 60c each, and directories 90c each. Second-hand charts are not to be advised. New ones are so cheap.

Any part of the coast can be dangerous to any sort of craft; but in the open sea a hundred-foot vessel, if of the right type, ought to be capable of going anywhere, but two men would have a handful with a boat that size. Most of the coast and islands

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around Magellan Straits and Cape Horn are inhabited by a lot of poor kind of natives, some of whom are friendly; others are wicked. Two white men who know how to handle themselves and how to conduct themselves toward others should be safe enough.

I would not advise making the trip without a small engine to kick through the Straits, if it's possible to get a boat with one. I know of a sailing-vessel that took eighty days to work through under sail; that's why windjammers kept to the Horn route.

Safest time to make that trip would be during the northern Winter; as for trading, there is little of that around Cape Horn, and as for the rest of the coast, east and west, where the coast is accessible it is almost certain to have a port and small towns at least, which are served better by the regular ships of trade. But you might make expenses. Ask Edgar Young, of "Ask Adventure," for best trade goods.

The Trapper's Merry Life

IT'S great stuff if you're built like a polar bear, can hike like Old Man Weston, and know more about fur-bearers than they know about themselves:

Question:—"Am writing you for information regarding trapping for profit in southern Ontario and Georgian Bay district.

As I am an inexperienced trapper, I would be very grateful if you would send me an estimate of what it would cost a couple of young fellows to buy a small outfit in that country, and any other information would be appreciated."—W. E. BELL, Escalon, California.

Answer, by Mr. Catton:—First, don't for one minute think of trapping in southern Ontario—there's no trapping there. Second, don't think about trapping for profit in the Georgian Bay district—there are too many experienced trappers on the ground there now. And thirdly, if you are not experienced don't expect to make any profit at all at trapping.

To be a successful trapper and make money you will have to have a lot of experience, which takes years to get; and then you will have to go far into the north or northwest to locate good trapping-ground. Trapping is all right for those men who have made a life-study of woodcraft and the habits of the fur-bearers; for others it is a delusion.

Suppose, for instance now, you have gone into a good section of the big timber in the Fall, somewhere about two or three hundred miles from steel, and blazed out a hundred-mile trap-line. You have set from two to four traps, one or maybe two dead-falls, and a few snares to each mile. Suppose too that you have built your cabin and your four or five wayside shacks, got your Winter's fuel cut and stacked and your Winter's provisions under cover.

All right. Now your work begins. You've got to cover that trap-line once a week. That means that you must mush on snowshoes one hundred miles every week in all kinds of weather and pack on your back or on a toboggan your grub for the week and your pelts as you find them. And often, too, the thermometer will register as low as forty below zero. Do you like the prospect?

Of course you could use a much shorter trap-line, but the shorter it is the less chances you have.

You won't be able to outfit for one season for two at less than five hundred dollars; and you won't outfit very strong at that price.

"Any other information" covers a lot of ground. If you will write again, giving me in detail just the information you will want, I will be pleased to give you that information.

Put at least five cents postage on all letters addressed to "Ask Adventure" editors who live outside the U. S. Always enclose at least five cents in International Reply Coupons for answer.

How a Wheat-Threshing Outfit Works

DO THEY earn their money? I'll say they do! But even so it's not a bad way to get your Summer traveling done:

Question:—"I am anxious for some information as to the possibilities of work in the Western grain-fields next Summer. I would like to know when and where the season opens and whether work of this kind will be as plentiful as it was this year. I want to begin as early as possible and am at a loss as to this kind of work."—ROY S. HARRISON, Winder, Ga.

Answer, by Mr. Whiteaker:—There has been in former years plenty of work in the wheat-growing counties of Texas, and also in Oklahoma; and there is likely to be even more grain raised on account of the cutting down of cotton-raising. The season opens in the latter part of May and the first part of June in Texas. From Dallas County west and north into the Panhandle are the greatest grain counties.

The thresher crew usually starts at the beginning of the season and works north as far as Canada. There are several threshing outfits that leave Texas and make the trip every year. The work is rather hard and the days get rather hot working around grain.

There are the teamsters that haul the grain, and the pitchers that load the wagons in the field with pitch-forks. There are two or three loading at the same time from the same shock of grain.

At the thresher there are the engineer, the cutter, sacker, feeder, sack-drawer and stack man who keeps the straw even as it comes from the stacker. This is a hot, dirty and unhealthy job as the fine chaff gets in your nose, mouth and inside of your clothes. There are a water-hauler, water-boy, cook, as they have their own mess-wagon, and several others.

A thresher crew is usually a jolly bunch of fellows.

Always address your questions to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Shotgun and Revolver Too

HERE'S a letter out of the boss' mail-bag, Mr. Wiggins getting the other barrel. As Mr. Hoffman has no additional information on the subject and Mr.

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Wiggins has, it is of course Mr. Wiggins who takes the floor in rejoinder:

FRIEND HOFFMAN:—I like to be called a liar (by friends at times) and as I am among friends, here goes (copy to Mr. Wiggins).

In 1916 I was stationed at Laredo, Texas, as U. S. Inspector of Customs; and it was an order of the day to lift all firearms of incoming traffic and return them upon return trip to Mexico of such passengers, and to lift all other arms being carried into Mexico and confiscate.

I found a nickeled, highly chased pistol in one emigrant's baggage and informed him that he could not take it with him but could leave it with some one until his return or otherwise let it be confiscated by the Customs House. He asked my permission to sell it to another American on this side and I let him. He turned it loose for ten dollars as I afterward learned.

The pistol had a double barrel, a shotgun barrel of 12-gage bore and *underneath* a small .38 barrel and a revolving cylinder holding six balls. Contact was made optional by means of adjustable firing-pin in the hammer; moved up with thumb, would fire balls; down, would fire shotgun shell. On the barrel was engraved "Colonel Lecocq." I presume it was of French manufacture.

I was not particularly interested in old guns as my .45 single-action Colt served my needs efficiently. However, I called in several of the other officers on duty at the time and showed it to them before I returned it to the owner. We discussed its possibilities as a riot-gun and decided that it was safer for us in somebody else's hands. If you can shake a frontier Texan, one who has shot and may need to again, from the use of a Colt single-action .45 caliber, 4¾ and 5½ inch barrels I would like to know your method in such education. I say, like taking the salt out of the sea, it can't be done.

Sorry I kept this to myself so long, but guns as a hobby never appealed to me. I know *the* pistol, and I know a .30-30 Winchester and a .22 high-power Savage are *some* guns and that's plenty for me. Those guns will do all I ask of any gun.

Inquiry among French manufacturers or collectors may supply you with details of construction. I was busy at the time and lost no time examining the gun and never thought of it afterward; but I know such a gun was in my hands.

Best regards ever from
A Roving Hoof,
MATTHEW B. COUCH,
U. S. Immigrant Inspector, San Juan, P. R.

Mr. Wiggins' reply to the copy of this letter which he received is as follows:

Your letter reached me recently, from Mr. Hoffman, and I thank you for the information contained therein. It's just such a spirit of helpful comradeship that enables us to make *Adventure* the publication it has become.

I think the pistol you describe so minutely is one made under the old LeMat patents, which were rather common during the Civil War. I have seen the old cap-and-ball weapons that fired a musket bullet, or the older buck-and-ball load, from one barrel and had a regular revolving cylinder and barrel, the barrel shooting the revolver bullets being above the larger barrel. I think that, while the pistol you had in your hands was made a little differently, the position of the barrels being reversed from the LeMat, it was a sort of grandchild of the old ripper of the '60s.

You mention Tejanos and the old Colt "hoglegs." Say, feller, don't I recall them there weepins well? How many miles have I packed one in the waistband of my pants, on the left side, and with the loading-gate turned out to keep it from sliding down that pants leg. A .38 WCF on the .45 frame. A favorite weapon in Oklahoma at that time, too.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible*. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

WALKER, OSCAR NEWLAND. Five feet, six inches tall, dark eyes and hair, fifty-five years of age, bricklayer by trade. Left Washington, D. C., 1901. Heard from him in 1905 from Omaha, Neb. At that time he was shearing sheep. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write to his brother.—THOMAS B. WALKER, care of *Adventure*.

ROSS, STURDY G. Would like to hear from him or any of the soldiers who served in the Ambulance Co. No. 4 at Fort William McKinley Rizal, P. I., 1915-1918.—Address HARRY S. SLATER, 1324 Euclid St., Boulder, Colo.

LOBBER, MRS. EVA. Sister. Any one knowing her whereabouts please write.—Address WALLACE PHILLIPS, Naval Torpedo Sta., Barge No. 2, Newport, R. I.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

DENNIS, JOHN A. Plasterer, thirty-four years old. Last heard from was in Savage, Md. Was thinking of going on the railroad. Mother needs his help and wants to know his whereabouts.—Address MRS. L. DENNIS, 242 Niagara St., Buffalo, N. Y.

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SRANEK, J. B. If you see this please write to your old side-kick.—LEW NEMETH, care of Arkwright Coal Co., Norway, Me.

YOUNG, IONE. Sister. Lived in Walled Lake and Pontiac. Any one knowing her whereabouts please write.—CARL ADAMS, 2640 Sherman St., Detroit, Mich.

PEDERSEN, CARL. Lived at 2113 Sixth St., Berkeley, Cal. Write to your old pal.—Address GLENN M. GLASS, 820 South Hoover St., Los Angeles, Cal.

WOULD like to hear from some of the boys who worked on Caro ranches in Wyoming in the eighties. 71 quarter circle, Sweet Water River, A cross A on old Woman Creek, O. K. bar. Powder River, C. Y. Platt River or any of the old-timers of Middle Park ranches. Blue and Grand Rivers, Colorado. Some of the boys who worked for Tom Watson.—Address JAS. H. HENDERSON, 300 East 134th St., N. Y. City.

COFFIN, HARRY, or EDWARD, of Franklin, Pa. Age forty-four. Was taken by German family when three months old. Mother died. Any information will be appreciated by his sister.—Address MRS. GERTRUDE DONOHEW, Upton Road, Wickliffe, Ohio.

PAUL. Please write or come to your wife and babies. We are lonesome and need you.—Address L. T., 431, care of *Adventure*.

LINDS, RALPH. Age about twenty-four. Last heard of at Ottawa, Ont., Canada. Write to your old bunkhouse mate of the Carved Mountain Ranch, Colorado, as I have good news for you. I am the fellow you re-named "Speed."—Address CHARLIE FISH, 431 Ohio Ave., Rochester, Pa.

WILD, HARRY. Of Bork Lake. The family and your many friends here have only kindest feelings toward you. Relieve our anxiety and let us hear from you. Literally, there will always be a light in the window for you.—Address ERNIE and PINK.

LIEDER, JOSEPH. Was on the U. S. S. *Lake Superior*, 1918-1919. Rating was seaman and later shipfitter, 2nd Class. Believed to have gone to Portland, Oregon, after his discharge. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address HENRY B. BRITT, A. & N. Y. M. C. A., Newport, R. I.

W. M. C. Mother is fretting herself to death. Do write. Trouble all settled. Daddy and mother forgive. —E. M. C.

SOLDIERS of former 324th Aux. Remount Station, Waco, Texas. Please write.—Address D. G. WILSON, Medical Corps, March Field, Riverside, Cal.

AM EAGER to get in touch with any or all enlisted men who served on Sub-Chaser No. 37 from Christmas, 1918, to May 1, 1919. Also with any enlisted men of the sub-chaser force that operated out of Inverness, Scotland, in the spring 1919.—Address EX-SERVICE, care of *Adventure*.

CURTIS, MINER A. Left Rogers, Arkansas, with his mother about twenty-nine years ago, when he was about two years old. Has since been heard of in Pennsylvania. Any one knowing his whereabouts will please communicate with his sister.—Address MRS. LULU CURTIS THOMASON, Box 154, Broken Bow, Oklahoma.

THE following have been inquired for in the October 20th and October 30th issues of Adventure. They can get the names of the inquirers from this magazine.

BENNETT, MARY AND FRANCIS; Bredwell, Clifford; Breedon, Richard O.; Broderick, Gerald Patrick; Caruthers, Jack; Colston, Amos Hillier; Conoly, Pat; De Moss, Bob; Desparios, Roy B.; Econonui, August A.; Eyles, Emil F.; Gabelle, James; Gerritsen, Gerrit; Gould, Terry P.; Griffin, Earl or Mother; Hall, John, Pvt. or Sgt.; Haun, C. F.; Henderson, A. L.; Ingram, John Milton; Karnatz, Chick; Martin, Harold; McNabb, Fred, Leo and Ethan; Mills, Lynden; Pechin, Miss Camille; Plouitz, Lewis J.; Punch, Mary; Schrock, Frank J.; Sigabee, J. A.; Smith, Benjamin F.; Stubbs, Ralphy; Thomas, David L.; Wendell, Warren; Wickroy, Allen Sigel; Wilson, Robt. C.; Wilde, Ted.

MISCELLANEOUS: Caulfield, Michael; Paasch, Wm.; Brett, James; Clarence; E. H. W.; Marine Guard who served on U. S. *North Carolina*, 1908-1911.

A LIST of unclaimed manuscripts will be published in the January 10th and July 10th issues of Adventure, and a list of unclaimed mail will be published in the last issue of each month.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

NOVEMBER 20TH ISSUE

Besides the complete novel mentioned on the second page of this issue the next *Adventure* will contain the following ten stories:

THE HOUSE OF THE STRONGEST — *Harold Lamb*
The strong man fights for his own.

DOC — *Captain Dingle*
No greater love than this—to kill——

BLAME IT ON BROTHER BILL — *W. C. Tuttle*
High jinks on *Jay Bird's* ranch.

THE LITTLEST CUSS — *Lewis H. Kilpatrick*
David of the mountaineers.

THE MAN WHO WAS BORN TOO LATE — *Frederick Moore*
Where the blind cruise led.

THE RED VEST — *Max Bonter*
Hobo's quest.

THE GOOD IN RAFFERTY — *Henry C. Copeland*
Man-values in the Klondike.

SLED WHEELER AND THE NAMELESS ORDER — A Three-Part Story — Part II — *John I. Cochrane*
A duel to the death for the jeweled "Twins."

BOS, OF THE HERD — *F. St. Mars*
Battles of the bull buffalo.

UP THE POLE — *Charles Victor Fischer*
Out of "the brig" to save a ship.

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The metal "Handy Grip" and Container last for years. When you need "Refills" buy them for the price of the soap alone. The soap itself is threaded to screw into the "Handy Grip," and the small stub removed from the socket can be moistened and stuck upon the end of the "Refill." *There is no waste.*

We took the rub out of shaving *originally* in 1903.

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